

AFRICA AND HER PEOPLES

S. DEAVILLE WALKER





Photo by

Stanley Sowton

YOUNG AFRICA

This girl is making fu-fu in the compound of a Mendi home, West Africa. Her two brothers are looking on.

AFRICA AND HER PEOPLES

BY

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'The Call of the Dark Continent'
'Talks on African Villages,' etc.

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Those who read this book in Groups are strongly recommended to make use of the "Questions for Discussion" that have been prepared in connection with it. They may be obtained by writing to the Home Educational Secretary at any of the above addresses marked *.

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PREFACE

THIS little volume aims at giving a bird's-eye view of Africa, and the African peoples ; it does not pretend to be anything more than an introduction to a subject requiring many volumes if treated thoroughly. It has been written at the request of the United Council for Missionary Education to supply "background material" for teachers, and especially for teachers giving missionary lessons based on other of the Council's publications.

The word Africa is used with reservation, for the scope of the book is practically limited to the Africa of the black races, and it only incidentally touches the brown peoples of the northern states or the whites of the South.

Africa is vast, and her people singularly varied. Nothing that can be said or written can be true of the whole. In the following pages the writer has attempted to convey some idea of that variety, selecting facts and incidents from many parts of the continent and placing them together so as to give, if possible, a true impression of the whole. He has tried to approach the subject with sympathy and open-mindedness, and whatever defects the book may be found to contain, he most earnestly trusts that unfairness or harsh judgment will not be among them.

The exploration of the African continent took more than a century before the main geographical features were revealed ; the exploration of the African *mind* has scarcely begun. For many years travellers have told us of such African customs as they have seen ; but few

have been able to look below the surface. Africans are reticent, and do not readily disclose their personal and tribal beliefs to the white man. Direct questions often draw most misleading answers. Frequently the African gives, not the true answer at all, but one he thinks will please his white questioner. +

In recent years the careful and scientific investigation of such men as Captain T. S. Rattray in Ashanti, the Rev. E. W. Smith and Captain Murray Dale in Northern Rhodesia, Mr T. J. Aldridge in Mendiland, the Rev. Canon Roscoe in Uganda, and Mr P. Amaury Talbot, for some years British Resident among the Ibibio of Southern Nigeria, have opened to us new conceptions of African life with its remarkable organization. By tact and infinite patience, and a deeply sympathetic attitude, these "explorers" are at last finding their way into unexplored realms of African thought, and are revealing features hitherto unsuspected. The recent work of anthropologists makes us long to know more of the African. This book has been written in the hope that it may so win interest that readers will be ready to take their part in helping the African to develop his latent powers and so take his rightful place in the world. The writer firmly believes that (in the words of the Commission on South African Native Affairs) "the hope for the elevation of the native races must depend mainly on their acceptance of Christian faith and morals." *

Thanks are due and are gratefully accorded to many missionaries and other friends who have helped in the preparation of this little book by suggestion and criticism.

F. D. W.

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MAP of AFRICA

Showing the places mentioned in this book

AFRICA AND HER PEOPLES

CHAPTER I

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

IN the great ports of the British Isles it is no unusual thing to see companies of black sons of Africa unloading or loading ships—poorly dressed men, with strong arms and withal a cheerful countenance. Some of them come in with the vessels; others have made Dockland their home and have taken to themselves white wives. Take an omnibus to the Strand, and in the Inns of Court we shall again find Africans—but with a difference; they are well-groomed, and immaculate collars and cuffs are conspicuous, for these men are law students who will in time be called to the Bar. Step into St Paul's Cathedral. Under the vast dome a service is proceeding. The Archbishop is consecrating five clergymen to the episcopal rank. The newly-made Bishops turn, and as the full light falls upon them we see that one is—an African. Dock-labourers, law student, Bishops—to those who have eyes to see, these representative men reveal the possibilities of the great race to which they belong, the latent powers of Africa. What of the land from which they come? What of the tribes and peoples they represent?

MORE than five centuries ago (1415) a little fleet of caravels cruised along the western coast of the vast African continent. From their mast-heads fluttered the

banners of Portugal, and their great mainsails, bellying in the breeze, were decorated with the coat-of-arms of the noble Prince Henry the Navigator. To find a highway to India, to reveal the secrets of the African coasts, and, if possible, to extend the Kingdom of Christ among the "Black-moors" had become the enthralling ambition of Henry's life, and scarcely a year passed without his sending forth at least one vessel to continue the quest. Slowly—so slowly—his captains crept forward along the long low palm-fringed coast-line, now becalmed for weeks together, now blown before the fierce hurricanes of the Atlantic toward that surf-swept shore. On every great headland they erected a cross in token that they claimed the land for the Church.

To those old-time mariners that coast must have seemed interminable. They made but slow progress: thirty years elapsed before they sighted the mouth of the Gambia (1445) and another twenty-six before they reached the Gold Coast, where they built the old castle that still stands at Elmina. Henry the Navigator was dead, but others continued the quest. Not until 1484 did a Portuguese vessel discover the mouth of the Congo. Then the pace quickened, and three years later that skilful navigator, Bartholomew Diaz, sailed the whole length of the West coast and was swept by tempests round the great southern headland which he in consequence called the Cape of Storms. "Not so," said the King of Portugal when he heard it; "round that cape lies the way to India, and wealth and empire. Call it not the Cape of Storms—rather call it the Cape of Good Hope!"

How vast that continent must have seemed to those weather-beaten sailors in their tiny ships! And in truth Africa *is* vast. India and China together would go comfortably into its north-eastern corner; there is

room for the whole of Europe in the north-western deserts and forests, and the United States of America could be amply accommodated in the great southern peninsula. Think of it : the Congo and its tributaries alone drain an area equal to nearly the whole of Europe ! If the Nile were laid upon the map of Europe, with its



MAP SHOWING THE SIZE OF AFRICA

With areas equal to India, China, Europe, and U.S.A.
imposed on Africa

mouth at Lisbon, its sources would be far away in Siberia ! Ireland could be submerged in the shining waters of Lake Victoria.

If it were possible to obtain an aeroplane view from untold altitudes we should find the main features of Africa extremely well marked. Too high to recognize detail, we should observe three great patches of colour : the northern portion would appear yellow—the great deserts of Egypt and the Sahara stretching from sea to

sea ; the central section would be dark green—the vast forests and bush of West Africa, the Congo basin, and beyond ; the southern and eastern regions would seem to be light green—the land of veld and rolling plains, covered in many places with long grass. Now let us pull the descending lever of the aeroplane and sink a little nearer to earth. The most conspicuous geographical features of this vast continent now become visible—four great rivers : (1) the Nile, rising in the blue lakes on the Equator and flowing for some 4000 miles through the yellow deserts to the Mediterranean ; (2) the Niger, winding a tortuous course from near the Western coast to its delta in the Bight of Benin, a total distance of about 2600 miles ; (3) the Congo, 3000 miles in length, watering the vast forests of the equatorial region ; and (4) the Zambezi, flowing for 1600 miles, from West to East. Keep these outstanding features clearly in the mind's eye—the three regions and the four rivers—and all else is merely a filling in of detail.

Unfortunately until quite recently exploration by aeroplane was impossible, and the secrets of the great continent had to be discovered by slower and more laborious methods. The entire coast-line was known by the end of the fifteenth century ; but the early nineteenth century found Europe still with very little knowledge of the interior, and various rumours of great lakes and snow-capped mountains were laughed out of court as good instances of the credulity of Herodotus and Ptolemy ! Even in 1788 the African Association proclaimed that Africa had no inland seas or extensive lakes, and—except for the Nile—no rivers running from the centre to its extremities !

Then the unveiling of Africa's mysteries began. It

was an age of exploration ; men thirsted for more detailed knowledge of the world, and it was only natural that many an explorer turned his thoughts towards Africa.

One of the first modern attempts to penetrate into the continent was that of Frederic Conrad Hornemann, a young German, who offered his services to the African Society of London to explore in the northern deserts. It was no easy task : the Mohammedans of North Africa were hostile to Christians, and jealous of European influence. Having learned Arabic, Hornemann disguised himself as a Mohammedan merchant, and, to complete the part he had to play, memorized a few Moslem prayers and passages from the Koran. Leaving Cairo with a caravan in 1798 he journeyed by camel through the deserts for about ten weeks to the town of Murzuk in Fezzan. It was an adventurous ride. Once he was denounced as a Christian spy, and only saved himself from death by boldly quoting sections of the Koran. From Murzuk, Hornemann crossed the merciless wastes of the Sahara desert to Lake Tchad, and then perished in the Sudanese state of Bornu.

Other men followed. In 1821 Dr Oudney, Captain Clapperton, and Major Denham started out from Tripoli, on the north coast, with a caravan of some three hundred persons. In the earlier stages of the journey there were occasional towns, and here and there a green oasis with springs and date-palms ; but as the caravan moved southward these became less frequent. Terrible indeed was the journey across the trackless Sahara. Rolling, wave-like hills of sand, broken here and there by stony patches, and ranges of barren rocky hills, were the prevailing features of the landscape. The whitened skeletons of men and camels told the tragic fate of many

who had crossed these deserts before them. During one scorching day, from their camels, the travellers counted the remains of one hundred and seven human beings who had perished by hunger and thirst, or had been overwhelmed by terrible sandstorms, or had met a violent death at the hands of the fierce Twareg robbers who infested these caravan routes and preyed upon travellers. At one desert well they found a hundred more skeletons, perhaps those of slaves who had failed to keep pace with the march of some caravan. As the three explorers reached the heart of the desert, wandering Twaregs and Tibbus became fewer. The men, and even the camels, suffered from thirst, scorching wind, and pitiless sun. The only chance was to push steadily on ; but there came a time when the very camels gave in, twenty of them sinking down exhausted within a few hours. Passing the desert town of Bilma with its flat-roofed houses and courtyards, the caravan entered another expanse of desert ; at last they reached the Sudan, and their eyes were refreshed with the sight of trees and green pasture lands with flocks and herds.

Like a great green belt, the Sudan—"the Land of the Blacks"—runs across the continent from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, a distance of four thousand miles. It is a green, park-like country, separating the deserts from the great forests of Equatorial Africa. A populous land withal, a land of great walled cities and organized kingdoms¹ lying between Lake Tchad and Timbuktu. Over all the north African States, the Sahara, and the Sudan, the religion of the Crescent (Mohammedanism) is dominant. But south of the Sudan the overwhelming majority of Africans are still pagan. ✓

In the Lake Tchad States, Oudney, Clapperton, and

¹ See Chapter VII.

Denham found such organized government as surprised them. In Bornu, for instance, one of the most curious of the old African monarchies, they were welcomed with a great review of cavalry and infantry. The body-guard of the ruler wore coats of mail from neck to knees, and had iron helmets; even the heads of their horses were covered with plates of iron, brass, and silver. Oudney died; Denham toured in the country south and east of the lake, while Clapperton visited Kano, the Manchester of the Sudan, and Sokoto, the capital of the Sultan of all the Hausa States of the Central Sudan. ✓

I

Now glance at West Africa—the country lying between Senegal and the Bight of Benin, and from the sea to the Sudan. From the sea, the voyager sees first a long white line of surf, breaking with a continual roar upon the sandy, palm-fringed coast. Ranges of hills are here and there visible in the dim distance. To the west, around the River Gambia and Sierra Leone, the monotony of the coast is somewhat broken by numerous inlets and islands, and the wide estuaries of rivers. Farther east, it becomes more regular and uninviting—little more than a line of dense bush varied here and there with fishing villages and patches of more open country. Still farther east, the coasts of Dahomey, Togoland, and Southern Nigeria are broken by treacherous sandbanks and lagoons, and the Niger delta is a region of dark mysterious creeks and rivers, lined with pestilent mangrove swamps and dotted with squalid villages inhabited by almost naked people. Much of this vast area—"the white man's grave"—is dense bush, a land of tangled thickets and primeval forests stretching in

many instances for hundreds of miles without a break. Many of the trees are so tall that their tops are completely hidden in the entwining foliage. There are the lofty silk-cotton trees and the stately palms, the india-rubber, the mahogany, and the bread-fruit, mighty clumps of feathery bamboo, and other trees of tropical size and beauty. Below, the vegetation is often so dense as to be impenetrable ; it is impossible to see more than a few yards through that tangled network of creepers which wind around the living trees and prevent many dead and rotten ones from falling. Festoons of convolvulus hang from the branches, and sometimes I have seemed to be in a fairyland of tropical loveliness. Over vast areas the growth is rank, and all is too crowded to be effective ; the rapidity with which the vegetation grows is amazing. But in many places there are sylvan glades and glorious vistas and solitary majestic trees.

Through these forests run footpaths just wide enough for men to walk in single file. Africa is a land of footpaths—tracks a yard wide, kept clear by the constant tramping of bare feet. For generations the great cities of Abeokuta and Ibadan—with populations of 100,000 and 250,000 respectively—were connected only by footpaths. Sometimes African kings have employed slaves to hack roads through the forests ; but Queen Flora has soon asserted her power, and the road has speedily dwindled to a narrow path, and even that has only been kept clear with difficulty. In an incredibly short time a neglected path or garden is overrun with growths and obliterated. Many of the footpaths run a curiously serpentine course. This is easily accounted for : some great tree has fallen, and the impossibility of moving it and the difficulty of getting over it lead the people to adopt the simple plan of cutting a path

round it. The fallen tree may in course of time decay, but the turn in the path remains. Where the path crosses a stream, a tall tree is cut down and allowed to fall across to serve as a bridge ; or else a bridge is made of strong creepers and reeds tied together—a frail bridge at best, and one that sways as it is crossed.

Here and there the forest gives place to more open country, usually covered with long grass. In some places there are clearings, where the villagers have burned down the trees, left the ashes as manure on the soil, and now cultivate their crops and vegetables. The tropical sun is merciless ; the rains, in the wet season, are torrential. In the past, these things were blamed for the terrible loss of European life ; but we now know that the real enemy is not an imaginary “miasma” arising from the ground, but the terrible mosquito, which is proved to be the carrier of malaria, yellow fever, and other African diseases.

In the far hinterland, behind this forest-clad “West Coast,” flows the great River Niger. For ages its very existence was doubted or denied. Herodotus in the fifth century B.C. mentioned it—“a great river running from *west to east*.” If such a river existed, where was its mouth ? No known outlet seemed large enough—unless it were the Congo, a few score miles of which had been explored by the Portuguese. Moreover, the Arabs spoke of a great city in these regions—Timbuktu. Where was that ? These mysteries fascinated men’s minds, and not a few hazarded or even lost their lives in attempting to lift the veil. One of the first was Major Houghton, who in 1790 went up the broad waters of the Gambia and perished in the interior. Greatest of all was the young Scottish doctor Mungo Park, who in 1795, at the age of twenty-four, journeyed inland from

the Gambia through hostile country. Suffering untold hardships, attacked, robbed, humiliated, held prisoner for months on end, sometimes narrowly escaping death, he struggled forward until rumours of a great river grew too clear to be doubted, and he knew he was drawing near to the object of his search. Then came the great moment, and Park wrote in his journal :

Looking forward, I saw with infinite pleasure the great object of my mission; the long-sought-for, majestic Niger . . . as broad as the Thames at Westminster, flowing slowly eastward.

His next objective was Timbuktu; but soon perils closed in around him so that to go forward seemed certain death, and in his eagerness to save the precious knowledge he had gained, Park reluctantly turned his steps to the coast.

He had found the Niger, but he had not solved the riddle of its course. Whither did it flow? Where did it discharge its waters? Park came to the conclusion that the Niger and the Congo were one and the same river, and in 1805 he returned to Africa to test his theory. With an expedition provided by the British Government he again went up the Gambia and struck the Niger as before. His plan was to build a boat and sail down it to its mouth, wherever it might be. But the fates were against him: his men died off like flies, and of forty-five white men only seven lived to see the Niger, and ere long three of these also died and another went mad. But Park pressed on, made his boat, and, in spite of numerous hostile attacks, sailed some hundreds of miles down the great river. But in a deep narrow gorge near Bussa, enemies gathered in strength. Attacked on all hands by spears and arrows, the frail boat struck on a submerged rock and Park and his remaining companions perished in the waters.



Photo by

Rev. J. T. F. Halligey

A FOREST IN THE YORUBA COUNTRY

"A land of tangled thickets and primeval forests. . . . In many places there are sylvan glades and glorious vistas and solitary majestic trees" (pp. 13-14).

Others took up the quest. Across the Sahara, through the West Coast forests, from Egypt, up the Congo, men sought for the Niger—never for a moment suspecting that the numerous streams and mangrove swamps in the Bight of Benin were its mouth !

Hornemann, Denham, Clapperton, and a host of others were all searching for the Niger. It was not till 1830 that the mystery was solved. To-day there are trading steamers plying its yellow waters, and trading stations on its banks. A railway runs from Lagos to Kano in the Central Sudan—a train with comfortable sleeping-cars doing the journey in about two days, at a cost of under £20 ; in other places also, railroads have been cut through the bush, and those vast forests echo with the sound of the steam-whistle. At the close of 1922 a small fleet of four French caterpillar motor-cars started from Algeria and crossed the Sahara, a journey of over 2000 miles, and in twenty days reached Timbuktu ! A camel caravan takes about seven months to cover the same ground. A desert railway is now projected. 

II

Turn to South Africa. It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast to the regions in the west and north of the continent. The coast is bold and beautiful : rocky headlands, such as the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Agulhas, give striking relief to the grass-covered hills beyond. Inland, the country rises in a series of step-like terraces to the great plateaux of the interior—the vast pastoral and agricultural plains of the Great and Little Karroo—and to the rocky ranges of the Drakensberg Mountains pierced with deep passes. The low, grass-covered, rolling hills, called *veld*, are broken

frequently by flat-topped hills (*kopjes*), that rise abruptly from the plain over which are strewn numerous farms and the countless kraals of Bantu tribesmen. These far-spreading plains and hills are by no means without beauty, monotonous as they may at first appear. Dawn and sunset touch them with rich colour; and the cool nights are radiant with the brilliant stars. The spring rains almost immediately carpet them with flowering bulbs, and arum lilies and other flowers grow in profusion. There is the low veld with its long grass, and farther north there is the tropical belt sprinkled with bamboos and palms, mahogany and ebony. Some regions to the south-west are barren and sandy; in the centre is the wide-spreading Kalahari desert; to the east the long grass and tropical lowlands of Portuguese East Africa. North of the Tropic of Capricorn we pass from the Temperate to the Torrid Zone; the vegetation assumes more and more the rich luxuriance of the tropics, and animal life becomes more abundant. It is a land of "big game."

It was through this country that Livingstone, the noblest of African explorers, passed when, in 1853, he left his mission station in Bechuanaland and journeyed where no white man had ever been. His explorations are too well known to require more than passing reference. Crossing desert, veld, and forest, visiting remote tribes, he reached the great river of South Africa, the Zambezi. He was the first white man to see the awe-inspiring Falls which he named after Queen Victoria. It is the largest and most wonderful waterfall in the world—being twice the width and almost twice the height of Niagara. The whole width of the mile-wide Zambezi plunges into a vast cleft in the rock four hundred feet in depth, and then roars through a narrow zigzag gorge like an im-

prisoned tempest. The sight is rendered more awful by six great columns of vapour that are visible twenty miles away. ✓

Livingstone followed the Zambezi westward ; then, retracing his steps, eastwards to its mouth in the Indian Ocean. To Livingstone that magnificent river was to become a highway to the heart of the dark continent, "an open path for commerce and Christianity." But the climate is bad : the mosquito and the troublesome tsetse fly wage continual warfare against intruders. To-day, right across that great river, there runs another highway—the Southern Section of the Cape to Cairo Railway. Crossing near the Victoria Falls by a magnificent suspension bridge poised 450 feet above the river, that long line runs over veld and through forest, northwards into the Congo Free State, with the idea of ultimately linking up with the Northern Section, which now extends southwards from Cairo to El Obeid in the Sudan.¹

III

The Nile belongs to antiquity ; the knowledge of it runs back to the very dawn of history. A thousand years before Herodotus, "the Father of History," sailed on its waters, it was known to Moses ; and long before his day it was the sacred river of the Egyptians. Known, yet strangely unknown, it ran through the fertile fields of Lower Egypt ; it stretched out its long length serpent-like across the deserts—but beyond, beyond ? Ah ! its "whence" was wrapped in mystery. Its annual rise and overflow was familiar to all ; but no

¹ The Cape is now linked to Cairo through Central Africa by mechanical transport throughout—rail, steamer, and motor-car.

man knew the secret of that vast volume of water that seemed to come from the parched deserts. Yet even in the time of the Apostles there were stories of three great lakes and great snow-covered mountains from which the river flowed—the “Mountains of the Moon” Ptolemy called them. But who could possibly believe that there were snow-covered mountains *on the Equator*!

The first to probe thoroughly into the mystery of the Nile was James Bruce, another Scotsman. In 1769 he journeyed by way of the Red Sea to Abyssinia, through mountainous country infested with lions and hyenas and by large black ants that destroyed his baggage. Civil war was raging, and might have threatened the success of his enterprise; but his knowledge of medicine stood him in good stead, and as a medical man he was permitted to scour the country with a body of Abyssinian soldiers. It was on one of these excursions that he chanced upon “the fountains of the Nile”—two little springs in a green hillock which rose from a marsh on a hill-side carpeted with wild flowers.

But it was only the source of the Blue Nile which Bruce had found; ~~the~~ the birthplace of the more important branch of the river—the White Nile—had still to be sought. There was a pause of more than eighty years. Then came news that three German missionaries, working near Mombasa on the East coast of Africa, had heard from the Arabs of enormous lakes and snow-covered mountains towards the setting sun. They themselves actually found the great snow-covered mountains of Kilimanjaro and Kenya. The Royal Geographical Society resolved to follow up this clue, and sent to Africa one of the most intrepid explorers of the day—Richard Burton.

Accompanied by Lieutenant Speke, Burton plunged

into the long grass of East Africa where the buffalo and the giraffe roam, and herds of antelope and zebra flee before their inveterate foe the lion. They discovered Lake Tanganyika in 1857. A year later Speke discovered the greatest lake of all, and called it Lake Victoria. Between 1860 and 1863, Speke and Grant thoroughly explored this lake, visited the organized lake-side kingdom of Uganda, and found that the lake was the main reservoir of the White Nile, which flows from it.¹ Along this river the explorers journeyed to Egypt, threading their way with the utmost difficulty through great stretches of Nile reeds and "sud"—a floating mass of vegetable matter and weeds that forms a formidable barrier—the haunt of hippopotami. They passed through country inhabited by naked tribesmen, Dinkas, Shillooks, and other Nilotic peoples; and on the way they met Sir Samuel Baker, who was working his way up-stream to seek the secret Speke and Grant had just discovered. But although in a measure forestalled, Baker's expedition was not in vain. The ancient tradition spoke of *three* great lakes: Speke had found one; Baker followed another fork of the Nile and it led him in 1864 to the second lake, which he called Lake Albert. Twenty-five years later the long quest was completed by Henry M. Stanley, who found that Lake Albert was fed by yet another lake (he called it Lake Albert Edward, after the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII) that lay at the foot of a mighty snow-covered range of mountains. The old story was proved true; the Nile *did* flow from *three* lakes and snowy mountains. Ptolemy's "Mountains of the Moon" were found at last, lying practically on the Equator, lifting their snow-covered crests to a height of 17,000 feet.

¹ There called the Victoria Nile.

IV

While Speke, Grant and Baker were searching for the sources of the White Nile, the Royal Geographical Society arranged for Livingstone to enter upon the same quest at a point farther south. For seven long years he explored the region to the south-west of Tanganyika, struggling through marshes and rivers infested by alligators and hippopotami. He found a wide river, the Lualaba, flowing due northward, and as there seemed strong reasons for supposing this might be the infant Nile he resolved to follow it. But death came to end his great work (1873).

Three years later, Stanley, having done important work in Uganda and around Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika, travelled westward till he struck Livingstone's Lualaba—at that point “a majestic river about 1400 yards wide.” And then Stanley and his lieutenant, Pocock, had to make a critical decision—should they follow this great river in its northward course and discover its secret, or go southward and explore in the direction of the Zambezi? Their decision might mean life or death for themselves and their African carriers. Long and earnestly they discussed the matter. The splendid river before them had never been explored. Suppose it were the Nile? What an opportunity for them!

“I say, Sir,” said Pocock, “let us toss up for it!”

“Toss away,” replied Stanley. “Here is a rupee.”

“Heads for the north and the Lualaba; tails for the south.”

Pocock tossed the rupee high into the air—tails had it. He tossed again—still tails. He tossed six times, and tails had it every time. Then they tried drawing straws. Still the south won.

"It is no use, Frank," cried Stanley, "despite rupees and straws *we'll follow the river!*" And they did.

Embarking their numerous followers in canoes, they made the great adventure. Frequent landings were necessary for food and sleep. Cataracts made it necessary to cut their way through the dense undergrowth on the banks, carrying the canoes or towing them as best they could. Day after day they were savagely attacked by armed warriors. Sometimes they were exposed to thick flights of arrows from the banks: the enemy took advantage of every difficult place, and lost no opportunity to overpower them. Sometimes the air was rent by wild cannibal yells of "Meat! Meat!" More than once they were attacked by fleets of large well-manned war canoes full of enemies and were obliged to open fire upon them. Even where there were no human foes, the forest on either bank was infested with huge pythons, gorillas, elephants, and leopards.

For some weeks the river flowed steadily northward. Seven large cataracts were negotiated and numerous difficulties were overcome. Then the river began to curve away to the west. Clearly it was not the Nile! Landing one day among a friendly riverside tribe, Stanley asked (in the Swahili language) what they called the river, and the answer came: "*Ikutu ya Kongo.*" And the intrepid explorer realized that he was voyaging down the main stream of the mighty Congo!

For more than seven months Stanley's little flotilla of canoes paddled down the great river—that magnificent highway through the primeval forests. In places the river broadened out into a wide expanse; numerous islands dotted its surface; river-side villages of basket-work huts were constantly passed. At last the expedition reached Boma, where the mighty river empties

itself into the Atlantic. Stanley had traced the whole course of the hitherto unexplored Congo. To-day, a railway runs from the mouth to Stanley Pool, and trading stations dot the whole course of the river.

•

Niger and Zambezi, Nile and Congo—these four rivers and the lakes connected with them form the main features of African geography, and around them the chief work of exploration has centred. They are the skeleton of the map of what Stanley called, not without reason, the “Dark Continent.”

CHAPTER II

THE AFRICA OF YESTERDAY

As the explorers, one after another, lifted the curtain, they revealed to the civilized world conditions so terrible as to thrill men with horror. They told of human sacrifices and cannibal feasts, of twin babies destroyed and the mother driven into the forest, of wives and slaves buried alive in the grave of a dead chief, of tyrant kings slaughtering their subjects like goats and terrorizing the smaller tribes around them. And everywhere—North and South, East and West—the land was blighted by the slave-raider. No wonder such stories called forth both horror and pity!

And unfortunately these stories were only too true. They have been authenticated beyond question. But there is another side to the picture—a side so obscured by the tragic and the horrible as usually to be lost sight of. Yet it is only as we blend the two that we get a right conception of Africa. It is as false to suppose that African life was wholly black as it would be to imagine it perfectly white. Like its own dense forests, Africa had its dark jungles of evil; but here and there rays of sunlight streamed through the foliage, and festoons of flowers brightened even the densest thickets.

The Backwardness of Africa

Perhaps the most startling fact about the African is that, while he has undoubted capacity, he has, some-

how, never achieved ; he has never been able to advance very far along the path of progress until aided by some outside impulse or tuition. The constructive faculty has been strangely dormant. To this day, stone buildings are extremely rare. Hardly any ancient ruins have as yet been discovered in pagan Africa ; the famous ones at Zimbabye, in Rhodesia, are of Phoenician and not African origin. There are on the Gambia River a few stone circles like the so-called "Druid Circles" of England, but probably these also are Phoenician.

Although stone buildings are almost unknown, Africans have attained to considerable proficiency in the use of thatch and mud. In many places their dwellings are most ingeniously made and show great skill both in design and construction. It is unlikely that the early inhabitants of Europe or India ever made such huge thatch huts as the royal dwellings of Uganda or the Yoruba country, or more ingenious ones than those of the Bechuana. The basket-work dwellings of some of the Congo tribes also, and not a few others, are neat, well-made and highly decorated. But in tropical Africa, with so many destructive insects and other forces at work, such dwellings cannot last very long ; at best not more than two or three hundred years, and very few so long. In many places there was plenty of stone about ; why did those tribesmen never learn to use it ? The early Hindus and Buddhists had their wood-and-thatch age, but they grew beyond it and became skilful in the use of stone. Why did not the Africans do the same ? The plains and forests are strewn with masses of rock and boulders piled upon one another ; why have the people not hewn some of them into images like those of other lands ? In the hills and mountains there are caves that have undoubtedly been used as dwellings ; why

have none of them been subject to some degree of enlargement or carving? It may be that the Africans have been limited by their fear of spirits, which would deter them from tampering with natural objects like stones and rocks lest the spirit reposing in such objects should be disturbed and bring evil upon the tribe or the individual.

The overwhelming majority of Africans are still using the most primitive tools and weapons, and their dwellings contain nothing but the barest necessities of life. They have never invented anything of a mechanical character—not so much as a “shadoof” for raising water from river or lake; in fact, very few tribes ever thought of making wells. Mark those tall, straight figures marching single-file along the narrow footpaths, carrying heavy loads upon their heads; they have never managed to invent a wheelbarrow on which to convey goods from village to village. They have never thought of a wheel!

A very remarkable feature of West African life is the use of “talking drums” by which messages are sent across the country with astounding speed. Among some tribes this has been developed into a fine art. In the Yoruba country, for instance, the tone language is reproduced on tom-toms, in high, low, or medium notes, by pressing or relaxing the strings which are connected with the skins at either end of the tom-tom. Still more remarkable is the drum language of Ashanti. Come into the compound (courtyard) of an Ashanti chief of high rank. He is seated upon a state stool surrounded by attendants. Just behind him are two large drums, side by side, each supported by two legs; in charge of them, drumsticks in hand, is the official drummer, ready at his chief's command to transmit messages or to give

a recital of the tribal history in drum language. When the chief goes forth, the talking drums are carried behind him. It is now proved that the drums do not send messages by a sort of Morse code—*they speak the actual words*. It is not drum signalling but drum talking.¹ The two drums—“male and female”—are constructed with the utmost care and skill and with singular religious ceremonies; and on them the drummers seek to imitate the sounds produced by the human voice. They have vowels and consonants, and they make elaborate use of accent, emphasis, gesture, pauses, and speed. The drums are the subject of rigid ceremonies and regulations; no woman may touch one, nor may any blood, jawbone or skull. Think of it—these Africans have learned to make drums talk, but they have never thought of making paper talk! They have never conceived the idea of committing their own language to writing—save the Hausas of the Sudan, who learned the art from their contact with the Moslem Hamites of the North.

Other lands have had sundry reformers, great religious leaders and moral teachers; Pagan Africa has never had one whose influence was more than tribal; and, except where outside influences have operated, nearly all the continent remains as primitive as it was three thousand years ago. With Africa before us it is strange that we talk so much of the “unchanging East”! The East has been subject to many changes; Africa has remained stationary for thousands of years.

¹ Captain Rattray, who is in charge of the Government Anthropological Department in Ashanti, has devoted most careful study to the subject. A high chief even lent his own drummer to teach him the wonderful “drum language,” and he succeeded in taking long gramophone records of the drum histories. The revelations in his recent book *Ashanti* are astounding. It is one of the finest works ever written about an African people.

Evidences of Latent Ability

But it is easily possible to exaggerate the backwardness of Africa. There are not a few signs of real ability if we have eyes to see them. The rudiments of art are latent in the African mind. What can be more beautiful than the bead-work aprons, belts, collars, necklaces, bracelets, pouches or dagger sheaths of the South-east African tribes ? ¹ Their calabash vessels and domestic utensils, their spears and shields, even their agricultural implements, are decorated with no small skill and taste. As I write, I have before me an elephant tusk, deeply carved in a spiral design to represent a procession of slaves chained together, and carrying loads upon their heads ; in singularly vigorous manner the incidents of the march are depicted—the capture, the chaining of the slaves together, the flogging of a delinquent, and finally a crocodile attacking a boatload of slaves crossing a river. The figures truly are conventional and somewhat stiff ; but very few Englishmen of average education could draw such a design so correctly and with so much spirit on paper, not to mention carving it in ivory ! The African who, without training, could do such work, must be capable of doing very fine work indeed under proper instruction. Nor is this in any way exceptional. A visit to the British Museum will reveal the skilful bronze castings of the people of Benin—always regarded as a singularly savage tribe. All over Africa for ages the blacksmith has smelted iron ore and wrought it into implements ; his skill is often considerable considering the crude tools with which he works.

¹ Alas, this work has greatly deteriorated in recent years ! Contact with whites, and the cheap rubbishy goods to be obtained from their stores, have spoiled the primitive good taste.

The Power of Organization

Backward though Africa may appear, she has an ancient civilization all her own. We are only beginning to understand how highly organized African life really is. Take, for example, matters of warfare. A Stanley, or a Baker, journeying through the land may be subjected to constant attacks by seemingly lawless bands of more or less naked savages ; but a closer acquaintance with these people reveals both order and organization, and even discipline, not at first apparent. Usually these warriors are acting under commanders as truly as British troops ; and though their discipline may be of a totally different order, it is no less strict. In some of the tribes there used to be what may not inappropriately be termed a standing army divided into regiments, acting under the command of their local chief.

At the close of the eighteenth century the Zulu army was reorganized by the terrible King Tshaka, who in his youth had seen, in Cape Town, European troops at drill. He organized his army into twenty-six regiments with distinctive "uniforms" of feathers and skins, and armed with distinctive assagais and shields. Cowardice and disobedience were punished with death. The organization went so far as to control the marriage relationships of the men. Every man was to be a soldier for life, and to ensure this, Tshaka brought the women and girls under control no less than the men and boys. The younger people of each sex were kept strictly apart, so that the young men might give their undivided attention to warfare, and any breach of this rule meant death to both offenders. The girls were divided into classes according to age ; and at a great festival held every January, permission was given to the warriors of a particular regiment to marry the girls of a particular

class during the ensuing year, all other marriages being forbidden. That terrible Zulu army is said to have numbered a hundred thousand men, and it was the scourge of South-east Africa.

In Uganda too, the great King M'tesa, without any European model to guide him, organized an army, and also a fleet for naval warfare on the lake. The detachments of his standing army were settled in different districts, and there were even military surgeons who put broken arms and legs into splints and were able to restore to their place protruding organs torn out by a spear thrust.

On the West Coast was the ancient kingdom of Dahomey—one of the strangest on the face of the earth, and one that maintained its independent existence for more than two centuries. It would be difficult to find a state in which cruelty was so rampant. Human sacrifices were offered daily; at the great annual "Customs" between sixty and eighty victims perished, and at the "Grand Customs," following the accession of a new king, it is said on excellent authority that as many as five hundred victims were sent into the spirit world to render service to the dead monarch. Less than a hundred years ago, Dahomey was a place of skulls; the walls of the king's palace were adorned with them, they were stuck on poles, were hung from the girdles of dancers, were heaped up on dishes before the king, and juju-houses (temples) were entirely covered with them both inside and out. In no other part of the world was human life sacrificed so lavishly. Burton estimated that the number of victims averaged five hundred per year in ordinary years and one thousand in the Grand Customs year. Most of them were doubtless criminals who, instead of being executed separately, were kept for the ceremonies. Old England, with its

hideous display of human heads above city gates, and decaying bodies hanging in chains from gibbets by the roadside, was mild in comparison with old Dahomey.

Come to the parade ground before the extensive palace in the Dahomian capital, and see through Burton's eyes a military review which was in progress when he visited the State sixty years ago. The troops of the line are drawn up in three divisions. They are dressed in short kilts reaching below the knees and a blue and white tunic without sleeves, so as to allow greater freedom of movement. They are armed with a variety of weapons —bow and arrows, knives, swords, and many with muzzle-loading muskets purchased from Europeans. The gun corps have powder flasks and bandoliers to contain their ammunition. Drawing nearer we discover that these Dahomian soldiers—*are women!* These are the celebrated Amazons of the bloodthirsty king; the officers as well as the privates are females. They hold high position in the court, and each Amazon has at least one slave.

Burton did not think much of the military manœuvres of the Amazons, which he compared to those of a flock of sheep. But when they stormed the fortifications of an enemy they fought with the reckless courage of mad dogs, utterly outdoing their male comrades. Another traveller, Duncan, witnessed a sham fight at a review of these Dahomian Amazons. Imitation fortifications had been constructed of acacia bushes, whose long sharp thorns made them almost more formidable than modern barbed wire entanglements. These ramparts were about eight feet high and sixty or seventy feet wide. It would be difficult for well-shod European troops to cross them. Yet, when the word of command was given, those bare-footed Amazons rushed that fortification, climbing upon

it as though the thorns had no effect upon them. In little more than a minute they had crossed it, and returned carrying with them pretended victims they had captured in strong stockades behind.

In our detestation of deeds of cruelty, we are apt to suppose that peoples who practise them are lower in the scale of humanity than they really are. Surely (we are apt to argue) tribes who practise human sacrifice and cannibalism must be of the very lowest type, little removed from the brute beasts. Investigation, however, shows that this is by no means the case. The old Fijians were the most cannibal people in the Pacific, yet they were by far the most advanced, building the finest canoes, the best houses, and making for themselves the best domestic and other utensils to be found throughout the South Seas. We shall find that in Africa tribes which at first sight appear utterly barbarous are in fact possessed of a very remarkable degree of organization, with codes of law (unwritten, but recognized by all), complicated ceremonies, principles of etiquette, and even moral and religious ideas that are astonishing.

Even in cannibalism there is a remarkable degree of organization and refined forethought. It was the practice of some tribes carefully to fatten their unsuspecting victims, providing them with wives so that they might not have domestic cares to worry them, and at last when the time came for the feast, to decoy them by some pretext into the forest and kill them by one blow from behind. Even those degraded cannibals did not wish to give their victims the pain of anticipating their fate!

Africa presents every degree of government from the tyrannical despotism of a warlike king, to a system of patriarchal control. In most of the Bantu tribes, how-

ever, the chief has his counsellors, and the king or paramount chief his council of indunas or headmen, who have more or less liberty to discuss public affairs and tender advice to their chief. Many of the West African nations have similar customs, and every town, almost every village, has its "palaver house"—a building consisting of a huge thatch roof supported on poles rising from low mud walls—in which matters of communal interest are discussed.

The African in Council

Robert Moffat, the pioneer missionary to Bechuana-land, has left us an account of the parliament or "Picho" of the Chuana¹ people in those days. The place of meeting was a large circular stockade formed of wooden poles driven upright into the ground side by side. The king, sitting upon a raised seat, presided over the great council of his chiefs and warriors, who sat on the ground in circles. Many of them were adorned with leopard skins and tails, and had plumes of feathers waving over their heads. Each man had beside him his shield and several spears, a quiver of arrows slung over his shoulder, and a battle-axe in his right hand. This was a council of war. After a war dance and the waving of spears, the business was carried on in good order. The king himself opened the discussion with a brief speech, and then remained silent while one after another addressed the assembly. All spoke with the greatest freedom, not even sparing the king;

¹ Among the Bantu tribes of South and Central Africa, the prefix "Ba" or "M," etc., is plural and indicates "the people." Thus in the above case, "Chuana" is the name of the tribe; "BeChuana" means the Chuana people; "SeChuana" means their language, and "MoChuana" means one individual. In Uganda, the name of the people is Ganda, the singular is MuGanda, the plural BaGanda, and the land is UGanda. In Rhodesia, MaTabele is plural, Tabele is singular, and SiNTabele is the name of the language.

they pointed out his faults and failings, and even publicly arraigned him before the whole council. From time to time there was applause, and occasionally some hissing. Except for the difference of dress, and the dancing at the beginning, the whole scene was probably not very different from the folk-moot of our Saxon forefathers.

“ Be silent, ye people, be silent ! ” said a great chief, shield in hand, and pointing with his spear in the direction of an advancing foe. Then the king spoke : “ The Mantatees are very strong and a victorious people. They have overwhelmed many nations, and now they come to destroy us. We must now concert, and be determined to stand. The cause is a great one ! I wait to hear what the general opinion is. Let every one speak his own mind.”

Several speakers expressed their opinion, and between each there was the verse of a war song. At last a decision was arrived at, and the king announced what action he had decided to take.

Tribal Law

Happily the need for such gatherings is rapidly passing away. No longer are the Bechuana harassed by relentless and cruel foes. To-day the tribal council and the palaver are concerned with more peaceful matters—the administration of tribal law and various affairs concerning the life of the community. The African is a born lawyer. Every tribe, however low in the scale of civilization, has its laws—unwritten, perhaps, but no less respected and obeyed. Up to the present only very few of the tribal law codes have been carefully studied by Europeans. But we know enough to be sure that African tribal life is organized to a very remarkable degree, instead of being vague and lawless as was once

supposed. The African is by no means a law unto himself, doing whatsoever his untutored instincts prompt; almost every action is regulated by age-long custom that has received such unquestioned obedience that it has come to have all the sanction and force of law.

Where the laws have been studied—as, for instance, in the ancient kingdom of Ashanti¹—they are found to be extraordinarily intricate, with most minute classification of social relationships, rules of succession and inheritance, property and land. Everything is worked out; nothing is left to chance. In Ashanti, the laws of land and inheritance are strangely like those in mediæval England; there are elaborate systems of leasehold and freehold, with provision for mortgage, sale, and disposal by will. There is family land, and tribal land, and Stool land (*i.e.* what we should call Crown land), and so rigid are the laws that even a tyrant king is forced to respect them. A monarch may (justly or unjustly) order the punishment or execution of a subject, but he cannot touch his land, for it belongs to the man's family. Very seldom has there arisen a tyrant who has dared to defy the traditional laws and usage of his people. In Nigeria, all land is vested in kings and chiefs and cannot be alienated; when no longer needed for the purpose for which it has been “given” to any person or persons, it reverts naturally to the king or chief who “gave” it.

In Europe we are constantly talking of “the rights of the individual.” Not so in Africa; the family is the unit, not the individual. The garden, the field, the house, belong to the family; the poultry, the cattle, the crops, even the children, are the property of the family,

¹ The Government Anthropological Department, under the masterly leadership of Captain Rattray, is doing most valuable work in investigating the laws and customs of the Ashanti nation.

and are held jointly. If a man is in debt, the whole family is responsible. When there has been a quarrel in which somebody has been cut with a knife or rendered unconscious by a blow from a club, it is a family matter, and the whole family are bound to avenge the wrongs of the one member. In like manner, the whole family of the assailant is held responsible and must pay the fine or in some way atone for the wrong done—or perhaps even suffer the punishment.

The average African loves law, and even in remote villages a great deal of time is spent in hearing "cases." In the Congo state, a quarrel about a single fowl has been known to keep the village elders engaged for a whole afternoon.

Come into a South African kraal. The headman and his counsellors are sitting as a court of justice. A plaintiff is demanding compensation for an ox that has been killed. The defendant alleges that he did not kill the ox ; he found it dying from a wound inflicted by another ox. With the skill and shrewdness of trained lawyers, the counsellors question and cross-question both plaintiff and defendant. One old man closely cross-questions the suspect. He begins wide of the mark and then leads up to his real point :

Counsellor : " Does an ox-tail grow up, down, or sideways ? "

The Accused : " Downwards."

Counsellor : " Do its horns grow up, down, or sideways ? "

The Accused : " Up."

Counsellor : " If an ox gores another, does he not lower his head and gore upwards ? "

The Accused : " Yes."

Counsellor : " Could he gore downwards ? "

The Accused : " No."

The wily questioner then forces the unwilling witness to examine the wound, and to admit that this ox has not been gored " upwards," but stabbed downwards.

At such trials, a great deal of real shrewdness is revealed, and in most instances there is a genuine attempt to come to a just decision, compensating the injured and punishing the offender according to the laws of the tribe. Usually the penalties are fair, though severe. A Congo tribesman who had for a single day illegally used another's canoe, was ordered to pay one-third the value of the canoe as a fine!¹

Early travellers told tales of cruel punishments inflicted on culprits. One missionary described the trial of two women on a charge of stealing. The offenders were brought before the king and his counsellors; witnesses were called (who prostrated themselves before the king before giving evidence); the prisoners were questioned and allowed to defend themselves, and on being found guilty, they were sentenced to death. When the court broke up they were made to drink a small bowl of poison. We shrink from the scene with horror; but in justice let it be remembered that a hundred and fifty years ago, in Christian England, men and women were constantly hanged for what we now regard as petty thefts! Some African punishments strike us as cruel and barbarous. With some of the Congo tribes a very common method of execution was to tie the unhappy culprit to stakes driven firmly into the ground, his head being tied with a long cord to a bent sapling; the executioner with one blow then struck off the head. We must not disguise the fact that for ages many of the African tribes followed customs as cruel as they were barbarous. Many writers have commented upon the seeming insensibility to pain and the corresponding callousness in inflicting it. The sacrifices regularly practised, and the scale on which they were carried out, are too ghastly to be described

¹ Professor Schweitzer's *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*.

in such a book as this. Thank God they are now passing away—horrible nightmares of cruelty and sin.

To-day, in some parts, the native courts are being replaced by courts presided over by European magistrates, who seek to do justice *according to European ideas*. But very often they know sadly too little of exceedingly intricate native law and customs, and come to a conclusion at variance with African ideas of justice. On such matters, for example, as land rights, and the whole subject of female inheritance, the European judge is likely to get very far astray. In many cases the change may be for the better: the gradual abolition of the more terrible and inhuman customs is all to the good. But in the smaller matters of ordinary law it is a dangerous thing hastily to destroy customs that have their roots very deep in the life of the people. In some British protectorates, however, the whole policy is to govern through the native chiefs; but no chief can pass the death sentence without reference to the Resident's Court. Many of those who have the deepest knowledge of African life are strongly of opinion that the true policy should be "not to teach them to become pseudo-Europeans but rather to aim at progress for their race based upon what is best in their own institutions."¹ The ancient British and Saxon tribesmen did not achieve the greatness that is theirs to-day by denying the institutions and customs of their own race and becoming imitation Romans or Normans, but by developing their own latent powers, having first purged themselves of customs incompatible with civilization. Let us look for a similar process of purging and progress among the peoples of Africa.

¹ Captain Rattray, in *Ashanti*.

CHAPTER III

A TOWN IN THE YORUBA COUNTRY

A Bird's-eye View from the Hill-top

WE are sitting on the brow of a steep, rocky hill that rises precipitously above the bush of the Yoruba country. Below, a large town of mud-and-thatch dwellings stretches itself out before us. From our elevated position we look down upon it almost as upon a huge map. At a glance we get an impression of its extent, its irregularity, its population, its life. We have almost an aeroplane view of its many courtyards and winding lanes and shapeless open spaces, its markets, its sacred fetich enclosures, and the big thatched roofs of its king's palace. West Africa, and especially the Yoruba country, is a land of towns, and this one is typical of the rest. Some of these towns have a population of 50,000, and even 100,000, while the great city of Ibadan has no less than 250,000 inhabitants. There are about forty other towns in Yoruba with a population of from 5000 to 20,000. With the exception of lower Egypt, it is the most populous part of the continent, and the Yorubas are one of the most highly developed peoples in all Africa.

The town at our feet, although quite large, is in reality nothing more than a collection of hut-like dwellings large and small, but all more or less square with an open courtyard in the centre. It is a panorama of huge thatch roofs, irregular, and in many cases decidedly hump-backed—roofs that are so large as practically to

conceal from our view the mud walls upon which they rest. In the courtyards—"compounds" they are called—with the aid of our glasses we can see the people doing their work, and our ears catch some of the characteristic sounds that rise at noon-day. We can hear the dull thud-thud-thud of the women making *iyan* (a food prepared by pounding yams) in that large compound that lies almost immediately at our feet. We hear the merry laughter of children at play, and catch a strange, almost wail-like song to the accompaniment of a tom-tom. Then the barking of a dog and the plaintive bleating of goats reach us. This is the real West Africa.

Between the houses are passages and by-ways, but in the whole town there is nothing at all resembling a street. The dwellings seem to have been dumped down indiscriminately without order or arrangement—in any position and at any angle. Here and there is an irregular open space, uneven of surface and littered with rubbish. Sundry pools of stagnant water glisten in the sunlight and breed mosquitoes. A couple of shallow streams wind their erratic courses through the town; they are convenient places for the women to wash the clothes and get the drinking water.

Those wide open spaces, studded with shady trees, are the market-places—the busiest spots in the town, where the life of the whole place centres. That very large dwelling beside the chief market is the chief's palace; you may recognize it by its exceptionally big roofs and from the fact that it has several compounds. To the right, between the brown houses and the green bush, we catch a glimpse of part of the great mud wall that once encircled the town—a relic of the troubled past when marauders crept stealthily through the encircling forests,

and the kings of Dahomey led their terrible Amazon warriors to the assault. Those ancient fortifications are more or less ruined now; their gates and towers are dismantled, and the deep, wide moat outside is now the general rubbish heap of the whole community—indeed, most of it is overgrown with a tangled mass of vegetation, the lurking-place of the gaunt hyena. The strong hand of France has curbed the warlike ambitions of the Dahomian monarch; the might of Britain has suppressed the raiders and forced turbulent chiefs to live at peace with their neighbours; the useless ramparts are crumbling away, and in some places they have disappeared altogether.

To the left, outside the town, are the gardens and plantations of the townsfolk. Beyond, stretching as far as the eye can reach and our binoculars carry, is the great dark mysterious forest.

Entering the Town

Let us descend from our lofty observation point, watching carefully where we place each foot, for deadly snakes glide among those broken stones and the terrible python is not uncommon. In West Africa one learns to be cautious. Having reached the foot of the hill, it is but a couple of hundred yards to the entrance to the town. In a miserable little shed that stands in front of it, a shapeless fetich keeps guard; the townsfolk credit it—or rather the spirit in it—with the power to ward off evil influences. Crossing the old moat by a causeway of red earth we enter the town, and follow our guide through its uncharted by-ways and passages to the palace to make friends with the chief.

Before the main entrance to the great hut-palace are a pair of Eshu huts—just four or five rude poles, three or

four feet high, supporting a little thatch roof, beneath which is the Eshu, or god of evil (in other words, the devil), a rude image of wood or stone—or it may be merely a lump of clay. Cowrie shells, food and other offerings lie around this representation of the much-feared divinity, and almost every day chickens or animal sacrifices are killed and their blood is sprinkled over it. Believing that this powerful Eshu is wicked, and delights in evil, the Yorubas never take it into the dwelling but provide these little huts for it outside the entrance. Many of the townspeople are avowed Eshu worshippers ; they may be recognized by the strings of cowrie shells, dyed dark blue, with which they decorate their bodies.

A West African Chief

Less than twenty paces from the Eshu hut is the entrance to the chief's palace. It is surmounted by a huge and well-made roof of grass thatch, and numerous retainers and idlers stand around to see us led in to the chief. Entering by a tunnel-like passage, we emerge in the first compound, where people are loitering and gossiping and the chief's women are pounding yams for the meal. The state musicians are thumping their tom-toms with amazing energy : if our ears were but attuned to their sound we should discover that they were informing the chief of our arrival, the number of our party, and sundry other particulars. Official page-boys and tall, dignified sub-chiefs and attendants now come forward to receive us and lead us to the chief's presence. As we enter an inner courtyard, the tom-toms get more vigorous, and the royal trumpeters strike up a weird tune in our honour.

Under the veranda of the main hut the chief sits majestically upon his wooden stool. Around him sit his

wives, some of his children and his courtiers. He is an aged man, with wrinkled forehead and woolly hair fast turning grey and almost covered by a high conical cap. His long, full robe is of figured silk, yellow and green, and over it a sort of shawl of bright scarlet hangs loosely from the shoulders. The brown feet are only partially covered by the straps of his red leather sandals, and in his hand he holds a fly-whisk which serves to emphasize his commands as well as interrupt the high revels of the hosts of flies that gather around his dignified head. A leopard skin forms a carpet beneath his stool, and around lie a strangely varied assemblage of articles, many of them, doubtless, the "dashes" (gifts) of chiefs and other visitors and suitors who have come into the chief's presence during the day—calabashes of various shapes and sizes, cunningly carved or decorated with cowrie shells, a piece of blue cloth from the looms of Kano, two or three new fly-flappers, a brass-handled dagger in leather sheath, a demijohn of gin, a pair of scissors (with the Sheffield mark) and an assortment of articles made of leather dyed red, yellow or green.

The "dash" system prevails throughout West Africa. No man would dream of going empty-handed before a great chief. And we ourselves must fall in with the age-long custom if we would win his favour and permission to explore his domain. So, as we seat ourselves on stools placed for us on a large piece of blue cloth spread before the chief, our attendants lay our "dash" at his feet—an alarm clock, a roll of velvet, a long silk scarf (capable of being wound round the chief's head as a turban, or used otherwise to decorate his person), a two-wick stand-lamp with ornamental glass shade, or a few items of cutlery. If we seek some special favour, such, for instance, as permission to establish a mission station, or a grant

of land on which to build a church or school, it may be advisable to add to the "dash" a small magic lantern, or even a gramophone. The days of "wireless" are only just beginning; how interesting it will be to see a West African monarch adjust the ear-phones, and to witness his amazement on his first experience of "listening-in"!

As the chief's eye wanders eagerly over his new treasures, the formalities—or business—of our visit are for the moment forgotten. But it has to come—the questioning as to our whence and whither, the nature of our business and the proposed length of our stay. It is more than likely that the chief's curiosity will prompt questions as to our country and the great king who rules there. Then we proffer our requests, ask permission to move freely about the town and villages of the chief's dominions, or ask for a supply of carriers to take our baggage on the next stage of our long journey through the forest. Arrangements are made for our comfort; a chief or well-to-do citizen is deputed to provide accommodation in his dwelling and see that our wants are supplied. Then we leave the chief's presence, amid a parting salvo of tom-toms and horns.

In a Yoruba Dwelling

Our host's house is a large one, but much smaller than the chief's; it has only one compound, and the roofs, though well made, are not nearly so huge. A glance reveals that the walls are composed entirely of mud, baked in the sunshine, and then plastered over with more mud.¹ The walls completed, stout wooden posts are driven into the ground, and to them are fastened the ridge-poles and rafters to support the roof. All round

¹ In some parts of West Africa a framework of wood and wicker-work is erected first and then plastered over with mud.

the compound are rows of posts upon which rests the overhanging thatch, thus forming a wide veranda which runs entirely round the court. The roof also projects considerably beyond the walls on the outside of the dwelling. This means that all the walls are well protected from the rains, and, with reasonable care and occasional repairs, often last for a very long time. Some of the dwellings are of considerable age, possibly even two or three centuries, and these old ones are usually inhabited by a finer type of people than the rest—old Yoruba families who are of purer blood than the extremely mixed population of to-day. The slave-trade has left an indelible mark on the race. The Yorubas were middlemen ; slaves captured in the Sudan were passed through their hands to the exporters on the coast. There can be little doubt that the Yoruba merchants kept back some of those slaves for themselves and took them into their compounds as wives or concubines, and this accounts for not a few features now obvious in this people.

To us and our servants our host assigns a suitable place on one side of the compound from which the women drive a goat or a few fowls, while our carriers bring in our boxes and sling our hammocks from convenient rafters. There is an earth floor, and no furniture whatever. Possibly in our honour a grass mat may be laid on the floor and a wooden stool carried in. Ere long, messengers arrive with a present from the chief—his return “dash.” It probably consists of a goat, one or two chickens, a supply of yams, bananas, oranges or eggs ; some palm-oil and dried fish for our servants, a carved calabash or two, and perchance some fine specimen of Yoruba work—a curiously wrought grass basket or tray or a piece of pottery.

We have now time to look round the compound and

observe something of the arrangements of the Yoruba home. Whatever home-life there may be centres in that spacious compound. There the domestic work is done, and all family and social functions are held. During the intense heat of the day, the women do their work under the shadow of the verandas. There they nurse their babies, pound the yams with short stout poles in a tub-like hollowed log, slice the vegetables, and prepare for the evening meal. There they adorn themselves, attend to their elaborate hair-dressing, and generally perform their toilet. The Yoruba are an extremely clean people; they generally wash themselves all over with water and soap twice a day. The domestic industries are carried on under the friendly shade of the big veranda, and here are the looms for weaving the family cloth. In the total absence of anything approaching mills, factories or workshops, the home industries flourish, and many if not most of the articles offered for sale in the markets are made in the homes of the vendors—mats, stools, calabashes, bracelets, rings and ornaments, leather-work, wood-work, cloth, and utensils for domestic or agricultural use.

The rooms that open off the veranda are used for sleeping when the weather is not too sultry—and they form a welcome retreat during the rains. In them are stored boxes or bales with such treasures as the family possess. In such a household polygamy invariably prevails, and each wife will have her own room for the exclusive use of herself and her children. When the sons of the family marry, they bring their girl brides to the family home and occupy one or more rooms round the ancestral compound.

In the centre of the court there may be a tree—a strange object, of no artistic beauty, and usually giving no

shade. Around it is a circle of empty gin bottles, half buried in the sand, neck downwards ; sundry rags and small strips of cloth hang from its branches, numerous egg shells adorn its twigs. It is a sacred fetich tree, in which dwells a powerful spirit dreaded and worshipped by all the family. On the ground, within the circle of bottles, stand several small clay vessels containing the remains of offerings—cooked plantains, yams and a little fish (unless the dogs have stolen it)—and also a stout stick, stuck into the ground, from a cleft in which there hang the decomposed remains of a fowl, placed there several days before as a sacrifice. Fifty years ago, two or three human skulls might have decorated that tree ; and even now one may occasionally be found, white with age and exposure to the heat and rain of many seasons. In some parts of West Africa such a sight is still common, but in Yoruba it is rapidly becoming rare. Human sacrifice is a thing of the past—at least we hope so—but the fetich tree remains, and still exerts a mighty influence over the occupants of the compound.

The fetich tree is not the only sign of religion in this compound. In one little room off the veranda we dimly see the forms of several idols : crude, uncouth figures they are, some decorated with cowrie shells and others painted in bright colours. One is Ibeji, the god of twins, another is a bowl representing Ifa, the revealer of secrets. Beside them, on the floor, stands a sort of round box or casket, a few inches high ; it resembles a crown or head-dress, and is absolutely covered with cowrie shells neatly sewn on to it, a large one having as many as two or three thousand shells. It is not, strictly speaking, an idol ; but rather the dwelling-place of Ori, god of the head, who is supposed to give good luck and success in various enterprises. A poor man will have a very small Ori



Photo by

Rev. J. T. F. Halligey

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF A YORUBA TOWN

"A large town of mud-and-thatch dwellings stretches itself out before us. . . . At a glance we get an impression of its extent, its irregularity, its population, its life" (p. 40).



Photo by

Rev. J. T. F. Halligey

THE PALACE OF A YORUBA KING

The palace of the Alafin of Oyo, the "King of all the Yorubas." Note the huge thatched roof. The porches are only permitted on royal houses. The old-time thatch is now replaced by unsightly corrugated iron,

casket ; a rich man will have a larger one according to his wealth. When a sacrifice of a goat, chicken, or some other domestic animal is offered to Ori, the blood is sprinkled over this casket, to the accompaniment of dancing and a beating of tom-toms. Now look up at the highest pitch of the roof. That hammer-like stick on the topmost point of the thatch is Shango, the god of thunder. It is placed there to "protect" the house from the anger of the deity—a West African substitute for a lightning conductor.¹ The West African is religious to the backbone.

Evening Sights and Sounds

The sun is declining towards the west, but there will yet be an hour or more of daylight. Let us wander around the town. As we pass between the numerous dwellings, we note that many of them are smaller than our host's, but they are all built on a similar plan ; and as we peep into their compounds we find the internal arrangements very similar, only on a smaller scale. A loud tom-tomming and the terrified cries of fowls induce us to look into one small hut, and we at once recognize it as a fetich hut—otherwise a temple. There is a miscellaneous collection of idols on the floor ; a worshipper is cutting off the head of a struggling chicken, and a priest hideously daubed with red clay and white flour, and adorned with numerous nondescript charms, is casting the divining nuts of Ifa. Before him is a wooden bowl upon the head of a kneeling female figure²—the

¹ Not infrequently West Africans have taken the lightning conductor on top of a Mission Church to be a Shango !

² Sometimes the figure is male—perhaps mounted on a horse ; or it may be a group of several figures, or a bird, or a snake ; or the bowl may merely be supported by several carved wooden legs. The variety is infinite.

whole bowl and figure being carved from one block of wood and brightly coloured. Within the bowl are sixteen palm-kernels, which the priest proceeds to toss up, one by one, letting them fall upon a divining tray. The worshipper is about to take a journey and he has come to enquire of Ifa if the morrow will be a lucky day to start.

Not far away is a strangely different sight: the hum of reciting attracts our notice, and peeping into one small compound we find a Mohammedan school, with a number of boys squatting on the floor, trying to read aloud from their wooden slates. Such schools are now found in many parts of West Africa.

We pass on to the big market-place before the chief's palace. The evening market has begun and the noise is considerable. Under the great lime trees all manner of goods are arranged upon the ground for sale—vessels of palm-oil, stores of grain, dried fish, pottery, wooden stools, vegetables. At the foot of a tall silk-cotton tree, whose huge buttress-like roots run out in all directions, a woman has spread out a display of cloth woven on her own loom. At the weird, twisted, snake-like roots of an adjacent tree, another woman has numerous chickens, tied by the feet, and a goat or two—the former wildly fluttering their wings and the latter butting savagely at all who come within reach. In the centre of the market ground stands the chief fetich-tree, adorned with the usual assortment of rags and bones and charms. The loud and incessant chattering of many voices, the high-pitched haggling over prices, the barking of dogs and bleating of sundry goats, make the scene as animated as its colouring is vivid. These men in long white gowns and red leather shoes are Mohammedans from the Hausa States; they have come to trade—and to spread their faith

As the light fades, clay lamps are kindled and soon throw their yellow glare over the scene ; the lamps flicker on the stalls, and the trees cast deep mysterious shadows around. Their purchases made, the people slowly move away, the sellers pack up their unsold goods in large calabashes and carry them off upon their heads. Soon the market-place is almost deserted, save for a few dogs that hunt around for scraps of food left behind. Next morning the vultures come to clear up. Without vultures Yoruba towns would be uninhabitable.

As we carefully make our way back to our compound, stumbling over the uneven ground, there are lights and blazing fires in all the courtyards we pass, and more or less savoury smells, difficult to define, proclaim that cooking operations are in hand. In our host's compound, the several sections of the family are preparing for the evening meal. While the men lounge about, tired after the work of the day, their womenfolk poke up their fires till the yellow glare lights up the thatch and throws the verandas into deep shadow, and stir the steaming cauldron in which the supper is stewing. Though it is the principal meal of the day, it may fairly be described as "informal." Men and boys gather around their several fires and eat stew from the common pot. The women and girls eat separately, and the inevitable goats and dogs, chickens and even pigs, watch their chance. A wooden spoon may be used to fish up some dainty morsel from the steaming cauldron, but fingers are the most useful of all. Squatting on haunches or heels, the family dip into the greasy mess, or fill clay saucers or calabash bowls with what they fancy ; then with much noise and lip-smacking, and sucking of fingers, they eagerly devour all they can grab. Sometimes the meal consists of salted fish cooked in oil, or baked yams and

plantains ; and the bodies of most of the animals and birds sacrificed to the gods find their way into the cooking-pots. West Africans never suffer from lack of food !

And now the ample meal is over. The men lie languidly about under the verandas. Snatches of song and discordant notes on sundry instruments cease ; conversation dies down, and, as the people become drowsy, even the voice of the story-teller is hushed. A few stray fireflies dance about in the shadows, and a solitary palm stands out black against the splendour of the tropical sky. The heat is intense, and the sleepers stretch out their limbs or turn restlessly as they lie. But Africa knows nothing of that poets' fancy "the silent night" : there is the incessant chirping of multitudes of crickets, the croaking of frogs, the awful noises of the bats, the loathsome laugh-like cry of the hyena, and occasionally a wild cry of pain when some animal is seized by leopard or python.

The Gardens and Beyond

As the day dawns, and all nature awakes, we hear a loud tapping or banging sound. It comes from the direction of the sacred chamber. Our host is consulting Ifa as to what the day will bring forth—good fortune or ill. With a stick he hammers on the wooden Ifa bowl and then throws his palm-nuts. It is perhaps an approach to a morning prayer.

Our morning meal over, let us go out of the town to see the gardens and plantations. They cover a good many acres, for most of the townsfolk are agriculturists, producing not merely vegetables and fruit for their own consumption, but also very large quantities for export. Practically the whole of West Africa's immense output of cocoa, rubber, oil, copra, ground-nuts, kola-nuts and

other commodities, is produced by Africans working on their own behalf instead of on plantations owned by Europeans. The West Africans are born traders—the women no less than the men—and they prosper as a result of their industry. We pass through groves of coconut palms, rubber trees, bananas or plantains, well kept and exceedingly fruitful. Beyond, we wander along narrow footpaths through forest and open country, passing scattered farms and villages. Every town in Yoruba has its subject villages all around.

A good many miles away lies another town, having its own chief and sub-chiefs and villages like the one we have visited. Still farther away lies Oyo, a town of 40,000 inhabitants, where dwells the great "king of all the Yorubas"—the Alafin, or overlord. Thirty-five miles south of Oyo is Ibadan, the largest city of all, where the Bale (local king) is the figurehead of government. A train journey of sixty miles to the north-east brings us to Oshogbo (with another 40,000 inhabitants) or a similar journey to the south-west to Abeokuta (population 100,000), the capital of the Egba Kingdom, which extends over nearly 1900 square miles. Although within the British Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, the Egbas have home rule, under their Alake (chief king) and his council. That railway is in truth a great highway, along which new thoughts, new customs, and innovations innumerable are pouring into the ancient towns and villages of Yoruba. Already in Ibadan and Abeokuta thatch has almost entirely given way to corrugated iron roofing, but they remain African towns in spite of changes.

But Africa is vast. The old ways are deeply rooted in the people's hearts. The past dies slowly.

CHAPTER IV

A ZULU KRAAL

WEST AFRICA, and especially the Yoruba country, is a land of towns ; South Africa is a land of villages—or, to use the South African term—of kraals. More than eighty years ago, the pioneer, Robert Moffat, told young Livingstone that over the vast plains he had sometimes seen, in the light of the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary had ever been. From Cape Colony northwards, across the plains and rolling veld, over the Orange river, the Limpopo, the great Zambezi, and many another river, are the villages of the great Bantu peoples.¹ Though of one great race, the Bantu are divided into almost countless tribes. For more than a century those dwelling in the south-eastern corner of the continent were labelled with the one word “Kafir”²—a term of contempt that ought never to be applied to them. Nowadays we are learning to call them by their proper tribal names—Basuto and Bechuana, Matabele and Mashona, Pondos and Swazies, Zulus and Tembus, and a score of others. These tribes, though of one stock and possessing certain main characteristics, differ considerably in their customs and mode of life ; their huts are

¹ See map showing distribution of the races on p. 139.

² The word Kafir means “unbeliever,” and is of Mohammedan origin—a word to express their proud Moslem contempt for these people. Europeans often use it as synonymous with “native.”

built differently, and their dress is more or less distinctive. Broadly speaking, the tribes keep to certain areas, to which they have naturally given their tribal names. Thus we find our maps marked with such names as Pondoland, Swaziland, Basutoland, Zululand. Let us visit Zululand and see something of the life of one of the finest of the South African tribes.

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As we enter the country and cross low ranges of hills, a glorious vista opens before us: a broad river winds like a silver riband through the green valley below; aloes and flowering shrubs give variety and splendid colour, their flaming scarlets contrasting vividly with the many shades of green on the hills beyond. Descending to the river brink, we cross as best we may by the drift (ford) to the boulder-strewn shore opposite where lizards and armadillos dart about in the sunshine, and flamingos or cranes rest on a single leg, the other leg and the head being tucked away beneath their wings. Or, perchance, one may see several crocodiles basking themselves upon a sandbank looking for all the world like pieces of broken rock. Climbing the steep wooded bank, we emerge on the undulating plain covered with long grass and strewn with low bushes and a few trees, and broken by bold, rocky *kopjes* (flat-topped hills). On—and on—and on; veld, and kopje, and stone-fringed river. It is possible to travel through such country for days on end. Each evening, the sky becomes liquid gold—then orange; the grey kopjes become purple; there is the crimson touch of sunset and the wondrous afterglow; then the silvery night with its illimitable expanse of stars, and the beautiful “Southern Cross” glistening like a cluster of gems. It

is cold as we lie beside the little camp fire ; and we wrap our blankets around us for the night. Then the dawn —fresh, bright, glorious ; and all nature awakens to the new day. There is something strangely joyous about the South African dawn. A herd of springbok bound across the plain in a series of curves, jumping gracefully over bushes six or eight feet high. As we strike camp, and ride away on our horses, a company of zebra get wind of us and gallop off at high speed.

A Visit to a Kraal

And now, on the broken hillside before us, a Zulu kraal, or family settlement, comes in view. Riding towards it, we pass a garden of mealies and Kafir corn. A few yards beyond we come upon two or three naked boys setting bird-traps ; our approach startles them, and they fly to the kraal for refuge. Dismounting from our horses, we approach the huts on foot. A few Zulus sit in the sunshine taking snuff. Amid a general barking of dogs others come out to see the strangers ; for although white men are often seen in most parts of Zululand, there is a good deal of curiosity. Some of the children are terrified and run away ; one suspects that their mothers are in the habit of frightening them when unruly with the awful threat that “ the white man will come and eat you ” !

Stepping towards the men we greet them with the usual salutation, “ I see you ” ; and they respond, “ Yes.” We ask for the *induna* (headman), and are told that he will come soon. Etiquette requires that he shall not hurry himself unduly ; so sitting down on a stone we wait his pleasure. The Zulus around us are tall and well-built, with shapely limbs and broad chests. For ages it was a custom to kill off sickly or deformed

children, and this and their constant warfare had a marked influence upon the national physique ; but these old practices are now prohibited. Under our so-called civilization the Zulus have slowly degenerated, though they are still a very fine race. Their bodies are well rubbed with oil, and their dress is scanty but sufficient. From the girdle hangs a row of wild-cat tails, and there is a leather apron behind, but there is no clothing on breast or shoulders, unless, feeling chilly, they may have their blanket wrapped around them. The old men are distinguished by a ring, worn round the crown of the head : of yore it was the sign of manhood and honour—of those who had “wetted their spears” in battle, but since the days of warfare have passed, the ring is becoming scarce. “We have no *men* now,” say the Zulus. The ring is usually made of sinews, or grass woven into the hair of the head and then rubbed with beeswax. Every man has his stick beside him ; one seldom sees a Zulu without one. Usually it is either a sort of long walking stick or else a knobkerrie (*i.e.* a stick about two feet long, having a big round head).

The women stand around watching our every movement ; they are erect, evidently well fed and healthy, and move about with ease and grace. They are accustomed to carry on their heads baskets of grain or big calabashes of water or Kafir beer, and there is no surer recipe for grace of figure. The chief garment of the married women is a skirt of leather, so prepared as to be quite soft and flexible ; above this, a blanket covers the upper part of the body, usually worn under the armpits and leaving the shoulders bare. The head-dress of a married woman is remarkable and looks like a reddish sugar-loaf cap ; red clay and fat are worked into the

hair, and the tight woolly curls straightened out with a stout wooden comb ; the entire forehead is shaven and the top-knot is often decorated with flat bone hairpins or snuff spoons. Every woman loves ornaments and has as many as she can afford—necklaces, bracelets, anklets, bands around legs or arms, ear-rings, toe-rings and sundry other decorations. They are made of copper wire, or iron, or bead-work. Some of these articles of adornment are remarkably neat, the bead-work especially being in good taste : the colours of the beads never clash, and the use of blacks and whites is particularly effective. The fashions, however, change continually, and of late years there has unfortunately been a marked tendency to adopt tawdry trinkets bought from traders.

While we are observing the attire of these people the headman makes his appearance, an elderly man wrapt in a blanket and carrying the inevitable stick—in this case an ebony one. He has a stubbly grey beard and deep-set eyes—a typical Zulu of the old sort. Seating himself on the ground outside his hut, and helping himself to liberal pinches of snuff, he pretends not to notice us. It would be very bad manners for us to speak first. But after a while he turns in our direction, and with a grunt ejaculates, “ I see you ! ” After answering with the customary “ Yes,” we make a few commonplace remarks and explain that we are travelling through the land. The old man is not exactly communicative but he asks numerous questions, listens to our answers, and keeps up a running comment of grunts most expressively intoned to convey every conceivable shade of meaning. Africans have reduced grunting to a fine art.

We are now introduced to the kraal, which is of the

traditional Zulu type. In the centre is the cattle kraal, a round enclosure surrounded by a wall of stones or prickly-pear or aloes. The cattle are the Zulu's most treasured possession ; by the number of his oxen his wealth is measured, and his greatest ambition is to acquire many cattle ; he values daughters more than sons because of the number of cattle they will bring to him when they marry. The cattle, therefore, have the most secure place available—the very centre of the kraal. The men themselves tend the cattle, the women not being allowed to touch them.

Around the cattle kraal are the dwelling huts of the family—large beehive-shaped structures, cleverly made of bent withies covered with wicker-work and thatch. A glance shows us the fondness of the people for circles ; there is not a straight line, an angle, or a rectangular building about the whole kraal. Primitive man has usually found it easier to build on the circular plan than in any other manner. Fortunately we have opportunity to study the construction of the huts, for a man and a boy are engaged in making a new one. The circular floor space, about fourteen feet in diameter, is marked out with long thin withies stuck very firmly in the earth, and bent over and tied together to form the skeleton of the hut about six or eight feet high. This rib-like framework is then threaded with flexible canes till it assumes the appearance of basket-work. The next step is to cover the whole with a thick layer of grass thatch. To do this, the man stands on the outside and the boy inside. Using a wooden needle and grass thread, the man sews the thatch to the wicker foundation, pushing the needle through to the boy, who in turn re-inserts it and pushes it back again. It is a slow, tedious job ; but time is no object, and the hut will

have to be well made if it is to prove weather-proof when the rainy season comes. The huts are all alike in appearance, and all nearly the same size, save that the headman's dwelling is slightly larger and may perchance have a grass wind-screen around it: all the doorways face inward towards the cattle kraal. Thirty years ago every kraal was surrounded by a stockade by way of protection from animal and human foes. Such a defence is unnecessary nowadays and is seldom seen.

The Headman's Hut

The induna now invites us into his hut.¹ It means going down upon our hands and knees to enter, for the doorway is scarcely three feet high. Within, the hut resembles a basket-work dome, surprisingly well made, and supported by two stout posts near the centre. The floor is slightly raised as a protection against rain flooding the hut; though made of earth it is as hard as asphalt and so polished by bare feet constantly passing over it that it looks like ebony. Between the two posts is the fire-place, merely a depression in the earth with a stone or two on which to rest the pot, and sundry cooking utensils around it—calabashes of various shapes and sizes, and some clay pots. The hut contains little beyond a few grass sleeping mats and wooden pillows—the latter so designed that the neck of the sleeper, not the head, rests upon them, and thus the hairdressing effect is not spoiled. The mats not in use at the moment are neatly rolled up and hung with two loops of cowhide to the side of the hut. Of course there are no windows; a measure of light comes in through the doorway, but often this is insufficient, and a bundle of long thin dried reeds is used as an illuminant. A man who has worked

¹ See illustration facing p. 81.

in the mines probably possesses a more up-to-date lamp—one of numerous novelties he bought with the money he had earned. There is no chimney; a little of the smoke finds its way out through the doorway, and the rest hangs like a thick cloud in the top of the dome, finding an exit through the thatch as best it may. In such a dwelling it is desirable to crawl about on hands and knees, partly because of the danger of banging one's head, and even more, because it is desirable to have nose and eyes well below that cloud of smoke.

As we sit on the floor our eyes become accustomed to the gloom, and we begin to notice things in detail. That basket, hanging from a hook in the roof, contains milk or Kafir beer; the basket is so wonderfully made that, when swelled by water being poured into it, it easily holds liquid without leaking. Also hanging from the roof we notice little bits of skin and fur, pieces of snake skin, dried toads, crocodiles' eyes and a variety of oddments: these are charms to guard against evils seen and unseen, and as a cure for diseases. The small grass brush beside the entrance is used for brushing away any dust or mud the inmates bring in on their feet. The floor is swept constantly. The Zulus are a clean, orderly people; very neat in their habits and delighting in a clean and tidy hut. The doorway may be closed when required by means of a door of wicker-work fastened with loops of ox-hide. It is carefully closed every night to keep out the dreaded *abatagati* (evil spirits), snakes, or other unwelcome intruders.

Such is the Zulu home. A polygamous headman—and most of them have many wives—will have several huts, one for each wife and her children, while they are small. As the children grow older they separate, the big boys going to sleep in the huts for the unmarried

youths, and the girls to the huts provided for unmarried girls on the other side of the kraal. There is generally a cooking hut and others in which the supplies of grain are kept, and there are shelters for the calves and goats. The domestic animals of the kraal also include milch cows and a few dogs; and there are always a number of fowls. These have all to be protected from wild animals. Big game are practically unknown now, though an occasional lion makes his appearance. Until recently leopards sometimes attempted to raid the cattle kraal—if the palisade was not very high they leapt over it—and hyenas were also a constant trouble. Sometimes at dead of night the silent kraal was startled by a disturbance among the cattle. The terrified lowing of the oxen meant that some beast of prey had leapt into their midst. At once the alarm was given, and the men, spear in hand, would emerge from their huts to attack the intruder—a task that needed considerable courage and care, for a cornered leopard is dangerous, and the lion standing over the body of an ox is prepared to defend its quarry. But such things rarely happen now. The crocodiles in the river, however, are still the bitter enemies of the dogs and goats.

Time was when other dangers beset the hours of darkness. Less than fifty years ago it was no uncommon thing for the *impis* (troops of warriors) of Cetchwayo, the last Zulu king, to sweep down upon one of his own villages and destroy it. "In those days," said an old Zulu, "we could not lie down without fearing that we should wake up spirits. We dare not talk after the sun went down. If a dog barked or a plover whistled, the whole kraal would be aroused and prepare to fight, thinking an impi was coming to eat us up." They had no fear of the surrounding tribes—they would not run

the risk of attacking Zulus ! It was their own king who might raid them and steal their cattle.

The Simple Life

The Zulus, like most of the Bantu tribes, live a very primitive life. They have but few industries, for their simple domestic utensils are home-made or bought at the white man's stores which now dot the country. The women and girls do the bead-work decorations, and both men and women help to prepare the hides of the cattle for use as garments. The men and boys make their own shields, assagais, knobkerries, pipes, snuff-boxes, and sticks. Such things as "trades" can hardly be said to exist, and the only "professional" men are the witch-doctors or medicine men. Nowadays, in most parts of the country, the people are able to buy such useful things as blankets and iron cooking-pots from European traders' stores, where they also buy their beads, soap, sugar, and a hundred and one other things for which a demand is springing up—indeed everything from a plough to a blanket, a khaki suit to "pink pills."

The people practically all follow a pastoral and agricultural life. The men look after the cattle, repair the huts and palisades, and hunt. As we stroll around their fields we find the women busily hoeing the ground or attending to the crop of mealies or Kafir corn ; interspersed we shall probably find crops of beans, sweet potatoes, yams, pumpkins, or sugar-cane, while children run about and scare the birds away. It is the women who do most of the agricultural work. Most of them have iron hoes, bought at a store, and in some districts the people have learned to use the plough and are copying the white man in his methods of agriculture.

When they have filled their baskets with grain or vegetables the women raise them to their heads, and in single file walk back to the kraal to prepare the evening meal. As they approach the village, a group of men and boys, assagais and knobkerries in hand, come swiftly over the broken, boulder-strewn hill, singing and calling to one another. Two of them are staggering under the weight of a reed-buck they have killed. Zulus love hunting—for the excitement as well as for the feast it provides. Their food consists mostly of porridge made from mealies or Kafir corn, and sour milk; but they are very fond of meat, when it is obtainable. There will be a feast to-night!

A Feast

The preparations are simple: the buck is skinned, and cut up, and portions go into various cooking-pots. Meanwhile, the women grind the grain between two stones—not a hand-mill, they merely have a rough slab of stone lying on the ground and pound and roll the corn upon it with another stone resembling a clumsy rolling-pin. Other women prepare a supply of Kafir beer, which is the national drink.

When the feast is ready, the men gather around the huge steaming cooking-pots. All eat with the fingers or with wooden spoons, dipping into the pot to their hearts' desire. The Zulu makes the most of such a feast, eating to the point of gluttony. He is particularly fond of ox-flesh; but his love for his cattle (or, at least, for *his own cattle!*) prevents his killing them except under very exceptional circumstances. One writer declares that the African would rather feast his eyes on his oxen, than feast his stomach upon their flesh. But cattle that die for any cause are always eaten.



From "The Essential Kafir," by Dudley Kidd Published by A. & C. Black, London

A ZULU KRAAL

"Around the cattle kraal are the dwelling huts of the family—beehive-shaped structures, cleverly made of bent withies covered with wicker-work and thatch" (p. 59).



Photo by

Rev. T. F. Lewis

A VILLAGE IN THE TRANSVAAL

The plan of this kraal is different from that of the Zulu village. The huts are mushroom-shaped instead of beehive, the roof overhanging the mud walls, and each hut is surrounded with an enclosure.



The men having finished, the women and children have their turn. The beer goes round and round ; it is surprising how much these people can drink without appearing to be intoxicated. And then begin the singing and dancing. The old men become reminiscent ; their tongues are loosed and they tell of the great days of Cetchwayo, their last king. One old veteran, with the ring on his grey head, boasts of the day when huge forces of armed Zulu warriors were flung against the British ; of how a section of this army closed in upon the English base camp, and after a stubborn fight of assagais and hide-shields against guns, captured it and slew every man in it ! "Men were men in those days ; now they have become soft like women, and hunt buck and gazelle, and are even content to tear up the fields with a plough," interjects another old warrior as he takes a pinch of snuff, and smokes his pipe. And as they listen to such stories, the eyes of the boys grow large at the great deeds of their grandsires !

As the sun sinks behind the purple kopje, the dance grows more furious. Both men and women are decked with bead-work, their blankets being discarded. To the music of rude instruments, or simply to clapping and the singing of a monotonous chant, the dance continues far into the night, with every possible demoralizing feature. These drunken dances cannot be described in such a book as this.

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Such is the simple life of the kraal. It still lingers, in spite of the steady northward advance of civilization and the increasing tendency of the men to seek work for a period at the mining centres or in the towns. Many changes are taking place—and not all of them for the

better. European clothing is becoming generally worn, especially by the men. Cheap novelties, purchased in Johannesburg, or Pietermaritzburg, or Durban, find their way to the kraals when the wanderers return, and too often vices learned from the white man are reproduced in places where he has never been. Happy is the kraal that comes under a different influence through having, not far away, a Christian mission station with schools for the children, a dispensary to relieve the sick, and a nobler message than that of the mines and the trader.

CHAPTER V

THE AFRICAN FAMILY

A THOUSAND miles up the Congo is the Bangala country. The banks of the great river are covered to the water's edge with mighty forests. Here and there a village lies in a clearing near the river's brink, and dug-out canoes are drawn up on the steep sloping beach. Near by, a dozen chocolate-coloured boys are busily employed. They have seen the little mission steamers go by, and with boyish eagerness have set to work to make a model of one. Their skilful brown fingers ply the palm fibre ; and with rude knives they slit bamboos into the required thickness and length. Some are constructing the paddle-wheels, others the decks, funnel and mast, and still others are fitting the parts together—chattering merrily all the while, and their eyes sparkling with enthusiasm. As the model boat grows towards completion it is clear that their powers of observation are of no mean order, for the imitation is excellent, and soon the boat is finished, with two decks, cabins, wheels, a flagstaff, and even a handrail. Excitement rises as they carry their treasure down to the water's edge and launch it on an even keel. What English boys would not be proud to have made such a boat five feet long and three feet high ? We call those boys " savages," and savage in truth are some of their ways. But a boy is a boy the world over ; and African boys come not one whit behind other boys in mischief and love of sport, in

inventiveness and industry in carrying out their ideas. They are brave too. In launching their boat those Congo boys, regardless of crocodiles, wade out waist deep into the water, and all the while the beach rings with their laughter and shouting.

Let no one for a moment imagine that African children are usually sad, weary little creatures, unloved and cruelly treated, dragging out a miserable existence. Most of them are as blithesome and gay as the sunshine that streams around them. Boys and girls alike are the very life of the hut-home, and the treasures of their parents' hearts. Yet in a score of ways their life is strangely different from that of our own children.

The Africans' Desire for Children

In some parts of Africa the people pray to the gods to give them children. The special protector-spirit of the tribe is regarded as interested in (and indeed responsible for) the continuity of the tribal existence; and so from time to time the people pray to this spirit for children. Often they will even specify their preference for boys or girls.

But in many parts of this vast continent the little stranger comes into the world with none too sure a tenure of life, for cruel customs and blind superstition often prove stronger than parental love. In some tribes deformed or sickly babies are not suffered to live. In other places, the birth of twins is regarded as a certain sign of evil influences at work, and either one or both of the children are killed—and perhaps the mother also, or at least she is driven from the village to find a dubious refuge in the wilds. Not even her own family will succour her in her misfortune, for fear of bringing evil upon their own heads. These practices

were never universal in Africa, and in areas under effective European administration they are slowly dying out. But unhappily they still prevail in some other places.

Africans are fond of children, and rejoice over each addition to their families. In lands like China and India, while a boy is welcomed a little girl is often not wanted, and her birth is regarded as a misfortune. Not so in Africa. The girls are often more welcome than the boys. One reason for this undoubtedly is that, whereas in Asia the girl's parents have to give a dowry to her husband, in Africa the custom is reversed and the bride's people receive a substantial gift from the husband or his family. In South Africa, for example, the prospective bridegroom has to give so many head of cattle as the *lobé* (bride-price). Little girls are therefore a source of income to their family; and whereas the Chinese father is troubled at the new expense that has come to him, the Bantu father calmly sits down outside his hut, takes a pinch or two of snuff, and while he waits for his kith and kin to come to congratulate him, he proceeds to reckon up the sum he will derive from this new piece of fortune.

There are, however, tribes or families that prefer boys. While welcoming the birth of a girl, the father rejoices more over boys, for he looks forward to the day when these boys will marry and build huts around his own hut, and in time he will become head of a large clan, possessing a big kraal; then, of course, cattle will come too, for will there not be many granddaughters to exchange for them?

It will be seen that there is a very mercenary side to the Bantu's desire for children. But behind all this, there is unquestionably a real love for their offspring.

Unnatural parents there may be—are there not such in Britain?—and often cruel custom or fear of evil spirits may lead the tribe, or perhaps the actual parents, to do something injurious to the child, and in some cases even to take its life. More often through sheer ignorance the parents inflict injuries upon their little ones in a misguided effort to relieve some pain or save them from some real or imaginary harm. But there is now comparatively little infanticide in Africa.

The African Baby

Naturally enough there is a good deal of difference in the customs and ceremonies with which the baby is welcomed, but everywhere the first care is to protect him from harmful influences. Some evil spirit may seek to injure the child, or some human foe may, as an act of malice, bewitch him. Such dangers are guarded against by a judicious use of charms, fetiches and other devices—for which the fetich priest or witch-doctor is duly paid.

On the Congo, immediately a baby is born, a new frond is cut from a palm and placed over the door of the hut. It serves as a double safeguard: it warns off certain people who are ceremonially “taboo” to the infant, and, secondly, in case of a village quarrel and riot, accompanied by a free fight, no one would dare to touch the hut so protected. This continues for a month, during which time that dwelling is inviolate.

Among the Awemba in North Rhodesia, when a baby is born the mother at once confesses to her nurse all the sins of her life; and such confession is always regarded as most sacred, and must not upon any account be divulged. Then the father having been told of his good fortune goes out into the kraal and announces to all

his neighbours : " Wa-kanando " (" He is for the hoe " ; meaning that it is a boy) or " Wa-mpero " (" She is for the mill " ; which indicates a girl). Congratulations flow in. Should the mother and child die, they are buried where two footpaths cross, and it is believed that the mother must have committed some great sin. When women pass the grave they bend over it and say, " Is it well with you ? " by way of comforting the dead woman's spirit which is believed to be still in the grave.

With some of the Southern Bantu tribes the witch-doctor performs an operation upon the baby not unlike vaccination, and rubs in " medicine " to protect it from evil. Then the baby is rubbed with oil, red earth, or a sort of paint. Other customs, from different parts of the continent, might easily fill a good-sized volume.

Almost everywhere, the baby's cradle is the mother's back. In some parts of Africa, such as the Congo valley, the mother, being exempted from work, takes her baby and goes to her parents' hut for a few months. The more usual practice, however, is for her speedily to resume her ordinary work in hut and field, and as she must needs take baby with her, she has learned that the easiest and most satisfactory way is to have him fastened to her back. This is done by tying him on firmly with a broad strip of soft skin, or with a coloured cloth. The heat of her body keeps him warm, and he is perfectly safe and out of mischief. The wife of a South African chief may have a special carrying bag, lined with fur and beautifully decorated with beads ; it is usually made of antelope skin, about two feet long, narrow at the bottom for the feet, widening towards the middle to allow room for the little body and arms, and contracting again at the top so as to allow ample space for the neck,

but too narrow to allow the child to tumble out. It is sewn together with the marvellous neatness which characterizes so many of the Bantu people, and every woman of rank takes pride in the bead-work with which it is embellished. This delightful little cradle is tied to the mother's back, or, if convenient, can be hung by its own straps from the branch of a tree or a peg in the hut.

The ordinary women, however, dispense with such luxuries, and are content to have baby tied in their own blankets. There are few more pleasing sights than that of a merry little black baby enjoying life on mother's back, throwing his plump, sturdy arms round her neck, or pulling her elaborately-dressed hair with his chubby fingers. There may be moments when he goes too far and hurts the patient, hard-working mother, and then he may get a sound slap. But usually the proud mother errs on the side of leniency, and not infrequently the little one, at quite an early age, tends to become petulant.

The baby soon begins to notice things in the hut, and fat brown hands are stretched out to sample the strange objects around him. He crows and laughs; he kicks and screams and learns to walk. Unless carefully watched, little feet stumble with uncertain movement towards the fire, and little hands attempt to touch the boiling pot or the hot stones around the fire-place. Infant ailments and sicknesses bring anxiety and sometimes anguish to the mother's heart. "Oh, save my little one! white man, do save my little one!" cried one mother, as she held out her sick child to a mission doctor. Those simple words are eloquent of the real mother-love of Africa.

Childhood

Babyhood and infancy soon give place to childhood, and we see the tiny boys and girls, destitute of clothing save perhaps a charm hanging round the neck or a bracelet of wire or bead-work, exploring the kraal of the South or the compound of West Africa. Their playthings are of the simplest description, but in some parts toys are not unknown—rude, unshapely things, truly, but the youngsters love them. (Do not British children often leave their expensive toys to play with some nondescript oddments of rubbish intended for the rag-man?) The African parent is as familiar as the English one with the plea “Tell me a story!” ; there is the same tendency to run and hide behind mother when strangers come, and the same fear of being alone in the dark—only much greater, because the African child is taught to believe that evil spirits are everywhere.

The play-age comes ; the children play together, get into mischief together, and quarrel and fight among themselves. It is probable that in every tribe there are group games of some kind for both boys and girls, and in some places the games are numerous and attractive. There are ring games, hiding games, guessing games, catching games, many of which would delight English children. In many parts of the continent string games, like our “cat’s-cradle,” are familiar ; on the Congo, for example, Professor Starr collected over sixty different designs, and every design had a separate name. Games played with nuts or pebbles are also very common, sometimes being played on a board with round holes, but in other cases with a number of holes made in the ground to receive the nuts when thrown into the air. The boys make toy bows and arrows,

spears and shields, and have their war games ; the girls play at being little mothers and keeping house, the older girls pretending to be "mother" to the smaller ones.

Dudley Kidd gives a charming account of the children's evening parties among the South Africans. The parents of one kraal invite the children of one or two other kraals, the invitations being conveyed officially by the children who are acting as hosts and hostesses. On very special occasions the invitations are sent out as much as a fortnight beforehand. Great are the preparations : the guests giving time and thought to the dressing of their hair and the oiling of their brown bodies, and the little hosts and their mothers making preparations for the food. Anxious mothers for days beforehand strive to impress upon the excited children that, when the great event comes, they must not fight, and must not eat so ravenously that people will remark : "See—that boy surely comes from a kraal where there is famine !" When the time arrives, the children are arrayed in their very best turn-out, oiled, painted, garlanded with leaves and even with flowers, and adorned with the best bracelets, rings, and necklaces. The party is quite "official," and as the little guests arrive each one goes up to salute the headman or chief of the kraal. Then there is the feast. Kidd¹ tells of one little five-year-old sharing a confidence with a guest in words that might be translated thus : "I say—don't tell any one, but we have got twenty-free mouses all being cooked with their skins on ; and we've thirteen ickle birds which are to be eaten on the hill in the dark, they have all got their fevvers and moufs

¹ No one has observed the ways of African children as this writer has done. His books, *Savage Childhood*, *The Bull of the Kraal*, etc., are delightful.

and heads and tails on, so they will be ever so nice ; but you won't tell any one, will you ? It's a secret." But the feast is not limited to these delicacies ; beef, mutton, goat, old hens, sour milk, pumpkins, fried locusts and Indian corn are usually in evidence. Then come the games, played with great gusto till dawn, when the party ends.

If there is water near their home, African boys soon learn to swim and to fish. They become expert in trapping birds, mice, lizards, frogs, all of which find their way into the general cooking-pot that the boys of the village set up for their own use and benefit. Both boys and girls make baskets of plaited grass, do bead-work, carve calabashes, make wooden spoons and sometimes a little simple clay pottery. They all begin to work at an early age, the girls with their mothers, and the boys with their fathers. Little girls may be seen tripping along the footpaths, balancing calabashes of milk or beer on their heads, or helping in the gardens ; and the boys look after the cattle, learn to hunt, to build huts and other things they will have to do as they grow up. But there is no *moral* training. The children mostly do as they please ; they are petted, indulged, and laughed at, but seldom if ever chastised. They are trained to be courageous, sagacious, resourceful ; tribal law and custom is carefully instilled into their minds ; but there is no attempt to train them in such things as truth, honour, or purity of life. There are numerous prohibitions, but the idea of moral training stops short at the negative stage, and has nothing of a positive character.

With many tribes there comes the time for putting the tribal mark upon the children. This is usually done by some form of tattooing on face or body. Often

it takes the form of cicatrization—a process which raises the skin so that the effect produced is that of a design embossed in it. Some of the designs used are very complicated and have mystic meaning. The process usually begins in childhood and proceeds year by year; certain marks indicate that a girl is marriageable, and then, when married, other marks are added to proclaim the fact. In some tribes the mark is a more serious deformity of the face or head. In one place a sort of bandage is bound tightly round the child's forehead to prevent the head growing wide, and thus producing a strangely long head instead of a normal one. With other tribes, the custom is to make a slit inside the upper lip and insert a flat piece of polished bone to push the lip forward, increasing the size from time to time, till the result is an absurd "duck-bill" protrusion of the lip, two or three inches in length. With some tribes the nose is disfigured, the ears, or the chin. But other tribes have no such customs, in fact have no tribal mark at all on the body.

The "Bush School"

As the children reach adolescence they are put to the "bush school," an institution common to large areas especially in West Africa, but by no means to the whole of the continent. These are conducted in secret places in the remote bush, far from the village. The "school" consists of an enclosure surrounded with an impenetrable thicket of thorns through which there is only one entrance. Within are a number of grass huts in which the young initiates live. These places are shrouded in the utmost secrecy, and it is probable that few who are not initiates are ever permitted to enter. A few main facts, however, are well known. There are

separate enclosures for boys and girls, always situated some distance apart; the boys' "school" is presided over by the head of the male secret society, and the girls' "school" by the head of the female secret society. On entering, the children adopt strange clothing, consisting, for example, of enormous grass skirts, sometimes worn over bamboo hoops, producing a sort of "Elizabethan waist" effect; their bodies are daubed with red or white clay, and often they wear a curious head-dress; their appearance is grotesque and even hideous in the extreme. During the few weeks or months of residence in the enclosure, the children are under severe discipline, and many degrading and brutalizing influences are brought to bear upon them. They are given new names, they learn a secret language, and are initiated into the mysteries of the Secret Society to which they now belong. There is evidence that they are taught some useful things, such as herbal and other remedies for sickness, and also the traditions and secret customs of their tribe or nation; but it is equally certain that both the boys and the girls learn much that is evil. After circumcision and unknown pagan rites, they leave the so-called "school" and return to the village to be no longer children but recognized as men and women. It is only too true that the few months in the bush have completely changed them; whatever innocence they may have had in childhood has gone.

On returning from the bush, the young people no longer live with their parents as heretofore, but take up their abode in huts or compounds reserved for unmarried youths and girls.¹ They now adopt the usual adult garments of the tribe, and are recognized as members of the Secret Society.

¹ In some tribes, however, the children leave home much earlier.

Betrothal and Marriage

Before long, arrangements for marriage are undertaken. The betrothal and marriage ceremonies of Africa vary considerably in the different tribes, but everywhere they are accompanied by all possible ceremonial. In some parts the arrangements for betrothal may begin at birth, or even before. There are cases in which parents enter into an agreement to betroth to a certain man the next girl born to them, and they may even accept an ox as a first instalment of the dowry—to be returned if the engagement is not fulfilled in reasonable time. Naturally such arrangements often lead to law suits.

With many tribes marriage arrangements do not usually begin until adolescence. As a rule, marriage is a matter of custom and social convenience rather than of love. A young man marries because he needs a wife to cook his meals for him; because he wants to start a hut of his own and have a family around him. In some cases the arrangement is made on his behalf by his parents with the girl's parents; but in other cases the young man makes his own choice. Among the Mashona and other Southern Bantu tribes, for example, a young man, accompanied by his father, will walk round several kraals looking out for a girl that meets his fancy. His choice made, there are several ways of "proposing" to her. One is publicly to sit down before her and lay a stone on the ground. The line of attack is somewhat naïve. The youth begins :

"This stone is speaking to you. It is not I who speak, it is this stone. Do you hear what the stone is saying to you? It is saying 'I want you.' "

A pause follows. Then the lover proceeds : "Do you hear what the stone is saying? What will you say to the stone?"

If the dusky damsel takes up the stone and keeps it, it means "Yes, I will be your wife," and negotiations between their respective fathers proceed. But if the girl laughs in his face, or says "No," he must look elsewhere.

Although marriage is so often a matter of custom and convenience, he would be a bold man who denies that Cupid ever disguises himself in a black skin. There are times when a girl will literally "run after" the man who has won her heart, and will resort to all kinds of strategy to win him and avenge herself upon rivals.

The question is sometimes asked: "Are African brides actually bought and sold for so many head of cattle or some other commodity?" It is not easily answered. Probably in many cases the transaction amounts to that; and where the girl is so disposed of without her consent or in spite of her wishes, the sooner means are found of changing things the better. But it is not necessarily so. If the man deliberately chooses a girl and she agrees to be his wife, then the paying of a dowry merely clinches the betrothal and cannot be objected to. As a rule, most marriages turn out happily—according to African ideas.

Marriages are always, and in all parts of the continent, celebrated with all possible ceremony, but the customs are so numerous and varied that it is impossible to attempt to describe them in the brief space at our disposal. Like her sisters in other lands, the African bride spares no pains to decorate herself, and the bridegroom, like other lovers, does all in his power to make his appearance as pleasing as possible in the eyes of his lady-love—and of the onlookers. There is the inevitable feast, and religious ceremonies are not entirely wanting.

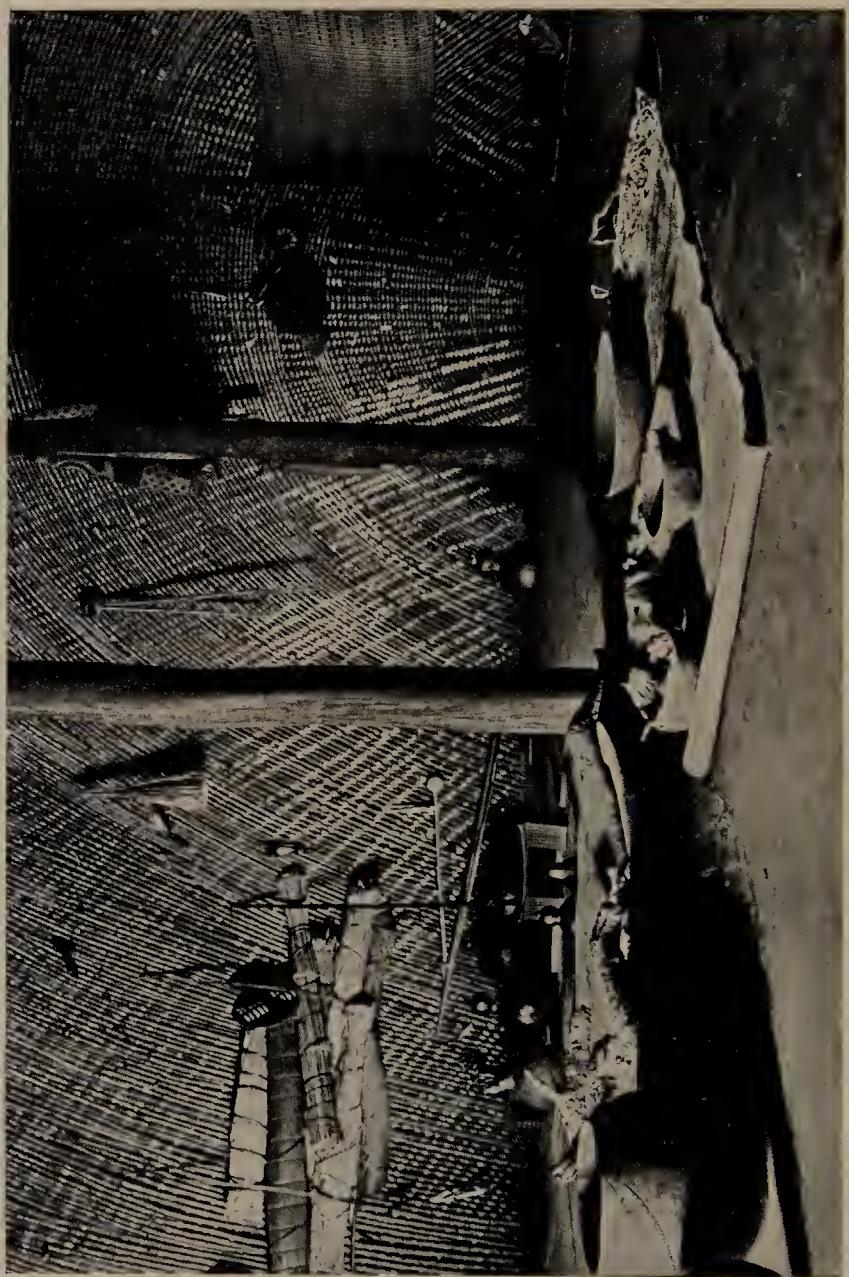
Polygamy is absolutely universal in Africa. In every

tribe every man who can afford it has two or more wives. Rich men and chiefs have several, and paramount chiefs and kings often have a large number. Possibly it is largely a direct result of the constant warfare of the past, for the killing off of large numbers of men created a serious disproportion of the sexes. In order to provide a husband for every woman it was found necessary for men to have several wives each. In the ordinary conditions of the village there is no room for the unmarried woman, and if there were, her very presence would open the door for worse evils than polygamy—African nature being what it is. Professor Albert Schweitzer tells us that the average woman does not like being the only wife, but *prefers* to have others to share the work with her; if she were alone, the cultivation of the banana plot, the manioc garden and everything else would fall upon her, and her life would be simply slavery.

Polygamy is perhaps the greatest and most difficult problem missionaries have to face. From the Christian standpoint it is intolerable, and cannot be permitted among Church members. The Church must work for monogamy and be prepared, if needs be, to lose a kind of popularity for the time being in order to secure the purity of the Church of the future. The chief hope of the abolition of polygamy appears to lie in the gradual uplifting of African society, until the conditions that make it convenient pass away. The cessation of warfare will enable nature to balance the sexes and polygamy will die a natural death.

The Position of Women

What is the position of the African woman? Certainly not her rightful one. She is too much the servant



A ZULU HOME

From "The Essential Kafir," by Dudley Kidd

Published by A. & C. Black, London

"The hut resembles a basket-work dome . . . supported by two stout posts near the centre" (p. 60). Note the calabashes, clay pots and grain baskets in the foreground. Grass sleeping mats are rolled up and hung to the left side of the hut, and also one or two knobkerries. Underneath these (just to the left of the centre post) is a wooden pillow.

and drudge, and too little the companion of her husband. But we must guard against extreme statements and sweeping generalizations. To say she has no rights would be untrue; to assert that she has no influence would be absurd. She has rights, and even privileges, safeguarded by numerous tribal laws. The Bantu wife, if her husband ill-treats her, may return to her parents, and in that case her father must return the cattle he received for her, deducting one or more for wear and tear—a procedure usually leading to a law suit. In some tribes a woman may own property in her own right. According to some old laws of the Southern Bantu, the punishment for accidentally killing a man was usually seven head of cattle, but for killing a woman it was ten head.

Among the Ashantis and some other nations descent is reckoned on the *female* side. This means that the nearest heir-at-law is not the son but the sister's son. An Ashanti proverb runs: "It is the woman who gives birth to the man." "I am the mother of the man," the woman says; "if my sex die in the clan, the very clan becomes extinct." Rattray points out that such views must necessarily raise the status of women in the community—"the whole conception of 'mother-right' affords the woman a protection and a status." The children belong to her and to her clan. In some tribes this is carried so far that the father has very little power over his children, who may even be sold into slavery by their mother's brother, who is held to be their nearest male relative, and whose property and liabilities they inherit. In tribes where law is based on this principle of "mother-right" it is often the bridegroom's maternal uncle who provides the cattle for the "bride-price," and the bride's maternal uncle, instead of her father, who receives it!

In some places (again Ashanti is an example) a wife who becomes a widow is inherited exactly like other property. Thus a new chief is entitled to the widows of his predecessor. On the other hand, "in Ashanti no woman stands alone, for behind her stand a united family, bound by the tie of blood, which has here a power and meaning we can hardly grasp. 'If you see one parrot do not throw a stone at it, for there are many others,' runs one of their sayings."¹

Female chiefs are not unknown. The late ruler of Swazieland (a country of 6500 square miles) was an old woman. When the great European war broke out, she called her headmen to council and said to them: "My brother George (*i.e.* King George V) is in trouble, and his enemies hope that there will be so much trouble in South Africa that he will have to send a lot of his soldiers here, instead of sending them to the place where the war is going on. Now I am going to help my brother George, and every one of you must see to it that all is quiet here in Swazieland, so that my brother will have no need to send any soldiers here." And that brave old soul kept her 85,000 subjects in peace. In every paramount chiefdom of Ashanti there are two royal stools, one for the chief and one for the Queen-mother, who possesses very great power and is able to rebuke the chief in open court before his councillors and wives. In Uganda also, the "Queen," who was the sister of the chief, not the wife, was a sort of second monarch, holding her own court and possessing the power of life and death.

There is no doubt that African women have ability. They have dormant possibilities, just as their men-folk have. Taking them as a whole, they are by no means

¹ Rattray, *Ashanti*.

the meek, defenceless and downtrodden creatures some people imagine. They can usually hold their own, and often get a good deal of their own way in the management of the home. Such things as "henpecked husbands" are not unknown in Africa. The West African woman is a born trader, and often runs her own "shop" in the great market-place. In Ashanti the official historians of the old courts were often women, whose prodigious memories retained with verbal accuracy the histories of the nation, and they recited them with an executioner standing ready to behead them if they made a mistake !

Of the moral atmosphere of the African home and village it is difficult to write. The people have standards of their own ; but it must be admitted that, if judged by our Christian standards, they are lamentably lacking. What we call "moral atmosphere" simply does not exist. Yet, on the other hand, if such restraints as they have are removed too soon, as they are being removed by the present disintegration of tribal life, the result may be disastrous in the extreme. Even the restraints of paganism are better than the unlimited freedom that comes from the hasty abandonment of belief. Hence the pressing need to-day for all kinds of missionary educational work. It is worthy of note that the Government Commission on Native Affairs has proclaimed "its conviction that the chief hope for Africa lies in acceptance of the Christian faith and morals."

CHAPTER VI

THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF AFRICA

Belief in a Spirit-World

No African believes that death is the end of existence. The most primitive as well as the most advanced tribes take it for granted that the spirit, freed from the body, lives on. They do not reason the subject out in any logical way ; they simply accept it and act upon it. They hold very clearly the distinction between spirit and body. To them the body is little more than the house of the spirit, and with some tribes it matters little what becomes of the body after the spirit has escaped from it. Some of the Northern Bantu peoples even go so far as to deposit the corpse on the village dunghill. "What matters it," they seem to reason ; "the spirit has fled." Numerous instances have been related in which unconsciousness has been regarded as death. People have been known to say : "He is dead ; his spirit is gone ; only his body is moving" : and they have proceeded to arrange for the funeral.

The usual belief is that in the spirit-world the emancipated spirits live a life in some ways resembling that before death ; and on this account food, weapons, bracelets and various utensils are buried with the body. In many tribes a man is buried in a sitting posture, with knees drawn up to the chin, in the way he was accustomed to sit beside the door of his hut. Other tribes bury the body lying full length.

The conception of a spirit-existence after death has been the cause of many deeds of revolting cruelty, and it is to be feared that these practices have not entirely ceased. In the Congo valley, for example, it was until recent years the practice to bury with the body of a dead chief a number of wives and slaves that they also might go to the spirit-world and tend his spirit there. Before the French took charge of the ancient kingdom of Dahomey, it was the custom for the king every day to send to the spirit-world a slave to report his royal actions to the ancestral spirits. The message was delivered verbally to the doomed slave, who was made to memorize it and was then beheaded. Sometimes, after the daily message had been sent, the king would recall something that had been omitted; whereupon another slave would be despatched to the spirit-world with a postscript!

The burial customs vary as much as those connected with birth or marriage; but they all point to one firmly-rooted belief, the certainty of an after-life. Some tribes, such as the Yoruba, practise hut-burial, the body being interred beneath the floor of the hut, which may or may not be at once deserted by the family.¹ In some cases special huts are built for the burial of kings and great chiefs, as, for instance, the huge hut-tomb of M'tesa, King of Uganda, and the Ibara of the Alafins of Oyo in Yoruba country. But for ordinary tribesmen the most usual place of interment is in a cemetery in the forest. This is usually in a solitary place where the forest is dense and the vegetation tangled and matted with tropical growth; although generally near to a village, it is shunned by the people. Sometimes

¹ To such an extent was hut-burial practised in Cape Coast Castle, that the town itself was a vast cemetery.

these forest burial-grounds extend for a mile or two—dismal places, the very air of which seems to be mysterious.

Where is the spirit-world? This is a question to which it is not easy to get from an African a direct answer. Some doubtless think of it as an underworld, down below the ground. (Do they not put the bodies of their dead down into the earth?) Others imagine that it is under the river, or in the great deep pool below the foam of a waterfall; sea-board tribes think of it as under the sea, or far away across the sea. It is widely believed that the spirit haunts the place where the body lies; and perhaps even returns to it as to a resting-place. There are still in England people so timid or superstitious that they fear to walk through a graveyard at night; no wonder then that the African fears to do so. He avoids that forest burial-ground, hurrying if he needs must pass by it, and never venturing into its depths of tangled creepers.

The Universal Fear of Spirits

The fear of the departed, the fear of the countless spirits freed from bodily existence—this is the gigantic terror which holds half Africa in chains. The spirits, even those of once loved members of the family, are regarded with fear. In life, husband, brother, wife, child, parent or friend was loved and cherished; immediately after death they become objects of dread. Strangely enough the spirits are usually regarded as hostile, ever ready to avenge some imaginary neglect, ever ready to injure even those they once loved. A very large part of African religion is an attempt to appease these spirits.

In many parts of Africa there is a great deal of noise

at a funeral—the banging of drums and blowing of trumpets, with much wailing, shouting and yelling. It is intended to frighten away the spirit from the house or village, in the hope that it will get lost and not return to torment the family or tribe.

Realizing that, in the long past, countless multitudes of people have died, the African naturally concludes that there are in the world countless multitudes of their spirits: in the forest, in the air, on the water; lurking in cave or hollow tree, in towering rock or dark pool; spirits, spirits, spirits—everywhere.

A thousand things confirm this belief. All around is the dark forest, a region of everlasting jungle, where nature is so prolific that every square yard is teeming with countless forms of uncanny creeping life; where it is never silent, for day and night multitudes of insects keep up continual chorus, and ever and anon the savage snarl of a wild beast, or the death-cry of the terrified victim, makes the forest echo and re-echo; where the loathsome python lies coiled around a tree awaiting its prey, and crocodiles infest that evil-looking pool in the dark recesses of the undergrowth; where terrific hurricanes of wind and rain come rushing and shrieking, uprooting great trees in their course, tearing the roofs off houses and tossing things about like giants at play! What could be more conducive to belief in spirits? In the great deserts of North Africa, with nothing but sand and sky and scorching sun, it is easy enough for the Arab to believe in one God; but in West or Central Africa men are daily faced with a thousand sinister influences and they not unnaturally feel themselves beset with evil spirits. Men go into that forest—and *some of them never return*. Surely a spirit has carried them off!

The West African Fetich

In the forest glade stands a gnarled tree, crooked and twisted as though some monster of iniquity had wreaked vengeance upon it. Around its trunk is a palisade of reeds, before which is a little heap of pebbles or leaves and chicken bones. As we watch, a villager passes along the narrow footpath ; he plucks a leaf and adds it to that little pile—or maybe adds one more pebble to the number. *That tree is a fetich* : the villager is presenting leaf or stone or larger offering as a token of respect.

Above the bush there rises a great naked rock, towering precipitously above all around. Its base is enclosed with a palisade ; no man—save perhaps a fetich-priest—ever climbs that barrier or dare ascend that rock. *It is a fetich.*

Crossing the country one comes upon another palisade. It runs, perhaps, for some hundreds of yards, and may possibly enclose several acres of bush land. The villagers avoid it. Within is a piece of marshy ground, perhaps a deep pool and masses of bush and trees. In that pool there is a crocodile—a sacred crocodile. *It is a fetich.* In the past it is possible that human victims, bound hand and foot, may have been thrown in as sacrifices. And who shall say that such things never occur to-day in that vast interior where the white man cannot see and the arm of Government does not reach ?

What is a fetich ? The term is used so loosely as to baffle the uninitiated reader in England and perhaps it is an altogether unsuitable word. In the sense in which it is used in this book—and, on the whole, we believe it to be the best one—it means the dwelling-place of a human spirit liberated from the body. The object may be large or small, living or dead ; it may be animate (e.g., a reptile or beast) or inanimate (e.g., a rock). If a spirit

is believed to dwell in it, it is a fetich, and as such is held in awe by all. It is not the tree or the rock that the African fears, but the spirit that resides in it—that powerful, vengeful spirit.

Some fetiches are made by priests. Anything will do—literally anything—a collection of chicken bones, or twigs, or dried leaves, or a little bundle of grass, tied up with a scrap of string or dry grass, smeared over with clay and daubed with the blood of a sacrifice ; it may contain a nasty, sticky, greasy mess of something—or perhaps it is powder—in which are mixed the cuttings of human finger or toe nails, bits of human hair, a tooth, or anything. These fetiches may be only an inch or two long ; they are seldom very large. The priest, having made such a fetich, performs a ceremony and offers sacrifice over it, and thus brings a spirit into it—great or small, powerful or less so, *according as he is paid by the man who desires to have it.*

Walking round the village gardens and cultivated plots, one frequently notices a weird little object tied to an upright stick among the yams or sugar-canies, or hanging from the branch of a tree near the cassava. *It is a fetich.* Desiring to "protect" his vegetables or crops from thieves, the owner has bought that fetich from his priest, and has hung it there in the belief that the spirit that inhabits it will keep thieves away. And in actual practice it works well ; half a dozen policemen could not more effectively keep off marauders, for the most hardened rogue in the village will not risk the anger of that spirit.

Sometimes, as one travels along the narrow forest paths, at a place where two paths meet there may be a display of articles laid out on the grass—in fact a little wayside shop. But there is no one to look after it ;

people desiring to purchase something put the proper money in an open calabash placed to receive it. What is the secret of this simple trust in the honesty of passers-by? Observe more carefully: hanging from a stick in the centre is a little mysterious bundle of some sort of rubbish—*a fetich!* In the presence of *that*, no one would dare to be dishonest. The belief in the powerful indwelling spirit is sufficient.

The word *fetich*¹ is not of African origin. It comes from the Portuguese “*feitico*”—an amulet or charm. And often it is not easy to distinguish between a true *fetich* (an object indwelt by a spirit) and an amulet pure and simple. The self-same priest supplies both to his customers—and incidentally is no poorer for the transaction. The villager continually haunted by the fear of spirits seeks whatever protection lies within his reach, and hangs charms around his waist, neck, or limbs, suspends them from his head-dress, his stick, or his weapon. There is one charm to protect him from the fierce leopard, another to deliver him from snakes, others to keep away such evils as disease, or to protect him from the malice of his foes. To a very large extent *fetichism* is fear written in capital letters.

We have now mentioned three distinct classes of *fetiches* or charms: (1) The natural objects such as trees or rocks indwelt by spirits; (2) small mysterious articles made by the priests and indwelt by spirits that are believed to be under their control; (3) charms pure and simple. Europeans frequently apply the word “*fetich*” to all of them; but the Africans (who do not ordinarily use the word *fetich*) have separate words for each class and make a clear distinction between them.

¹ In some parts the word “*juju*” is used instead of *fetich*.

The Fetich Priest

It is difficult to speak with restraint of the fetich priests and priestesses. Many of them are cunning impostors of the blackest type. Probably some of them believe in their own power to control spirits ; but there can be little doubt that they wilfully deceive the people, and make money out of their superstition and credulity. Many of them are past-masters in the art of mixing poisons—to produce almost every effect. They can make poisons that will kill instantly or that will take many months to work through the human system. Sometimes a man will go to his fetich-priest to purchase a fetich to cause an enemy to die. The crafty rogue at once produces such a fetich and instructs his client as to the way of using it. It may, for example, be two or three little sticks with a few yards of string wrapped round. The sticks are to be stuck into the ground, and the string unwound and re-wound, while certain magic words are being muttered, together with the name of the intended victim. It is only a question of time—days or weeks—and that man has the satisfaction of knowing that his enemy has slipped off this mortal coil. Of course he believes that it was the spirit in the fetich that killed him ; but those who have experience of fetich priests will not accuse us of want of charity if we suggest that the one who sold that fetich gave “ the spirit ” some little assistance.

The Witch-Doctor

Among the Southern and Eastern Bantu the witch-doctor takes the place of the fetich priest.¹ These

¹ Some Europeans speak of the fetich priest as a witch-doctor or a medicine-man. This use of the term, however, is misleading. The names used in the text best describe the functions of the men.

Bantu peoples have no fetiches, no palisaded trees or rocks, no curious bundles of sticks or feathers hanging from trees. They believe in spirits and fear them, but even more do they fear the men who control the spirits. It is firmly held that it is possible for human beings to have familiar spirits, and, by their magic powers, to bring evil upon people they desire to injure. All evils that come upon the individual or the clan are thought to be the result of witchcraft. Someone is ill and perhaps dies, a child is lost in the forest or perchance is killed by a leopard, a hunter is crushed by an elephant or bitten by a deadly puff-adder, or some mysterious disease breaks out among the cattle—all these accidents of life are attributed, not to natural causes, but to magic practised by some wizard or witch. If the victim was fortunate enough to escape with a mauling it was obviously due to some powerful charm he was wearing at the time. If death resulted, it is proof positive that the charm was not strong enough to resist the evil power of the wizard.

The strength of this fear of magic is amazing, and often it lingers in the hearts of men and women who have come under the influence of education and Christianity. Often the missionary finds it lingering among his converts. We need not be altogether surprised at this, for there used to be a similar belief in England, and even so late as the eighteenth century old women were burned alive on charge of witchcraft.

It sometimes happens that there is great excitement in the kraal. The chief is dead ; no animal killed him, no foe slew him—he just died. What could be clearer proof of magic ? The witch-doctor is called to discover the wizard or witch who has done this evil deed. The whole population of the village is assembled just out-

side the kraal, sitting on the ground in a circle. The witch-doctor (sometimes called the medicine-man),¹ decked out for the occasion in skins of animals, wild-cats' tails, bladders, feathers, and any other thing he can get hold of, examines the corpse, smells it, dances round it, and sometimes whispers—or yells—to it such questions as : “Who did it ? Tell me, O chief, who bewitched you ? Who was it that killed you ? Ah ! Ah !—it was—.” Then, grasping his magic stick, he springs out of the hut, and with capers, leaps and dances, as unlike any human movements as possible, he bounds into the circle of waiting and fearful people. He dances round waving his arms and stick while his assistants beat on drums ; the ring is scarce large enough for his performances. Then, dropping down upon hands and knees, he pretends to “smell out” the evildoer. He crawls from one person to another, making a noise which is suggestive of smelling. It may be that he sincerely believes in this power of scent ; but it can hardly be doubted that in not a few cases he is bribed to denounce some person who is unpopular, or is an object of jealousy or personal hate. Be that as it may, a victim is at last pounced upon and proclaimed to be the guilty party.

Then follows the trial by ordeal. In many cases it is the poison cup ; in others it is a test such as picking a pebble from a cauldron of boiling water, walking with bare feet over white-hot stones, holding on to red-hot spears, or perhaps it is some even more revolting test. The result of the ordeal is almost certain to be acclaimed as convincing proof of the guilt of the accused, and the

¹ The witch-doctor is not in any sense a physician, but often there is also a “medicine-man” who does, after a fashion, attempt to heal sick people.

punishment is death, often in some slow and terrible form, but sometimes instant and merciful. Terrible indeed has been the toll of human life taken by witchcraft and the ordeal. Happily, with the extension of white rule, such customs give place to judicial enquiry and trial in accordance with the usage of all civilized nations ; but the old custom still prevails over wide areas of Africa, and it is to be feared that it is still occasionally practised in secret in territories nominally under European rule. So recently as 1923 two men in the Transvaal were sentenced to death for burning a supposed witch.

The Rain-Maker

In many parts of South Africa the rainfall is low and uncertain. Often large tribes maintain a precarious existence ; when the rain fails, rivers run dry, their crops wither, their cattle die, and they themselves are reduced almost to the point of starvation. Under such conditions, the professional rain-maker is called for ; it is confidently believed that he has power to influence the clouds and bring the much-needed rain, and chief and people call upon him to use his magic art for the deliverance of the tribe. Often one individual combines the two offices of witch-doctor and rain-maker ; and sometimes he also assumes the rôle of prophet and pretends to solve mysteries and reveal secrets. The methods of the rain-makers vary, but all are barbarous and often cruel. Not infrequently there is a smelling-out ceremony and someone is accused of driving away the rain—the punishment is probably death, or if the region is one under effective European control, heavy fines of cattle or other goods. It is around such a magic-monger, witch-doctor, medicine-man, or rain-maker, that the everyday religion of the Southern Bantu tribes largely centres.

Many Gods

But the religious beliefs of Africa do not end here. Over and above the multitude of disembodied human spirits, the African believes in the existence and power of spirits of a totally different order—spirits that are entirely superhuman and have never inhabited ordinary human bodies. To speak of these as “fetiches” would be misleading and confusing, though this is often done by Europeans (and by Africans, who have learned to use the term, when they converse with Europeans). It would be nearer the truth, and would help to a clearer view of the subject, if we spoke of these superhuman beings as gods and goddesses, for, indeed, they are almost if not quite similar to what are so termed in India or China. Some tribes believe in the Thunder-god, the Iron-god, the Forest-god, the Smallpox-god, the god of Twins, the Rain-god, the War-god, the River-god, the Sun-god and many others. Among the Yoruba people, these beings are termed *Orisha* (gods). Sometimes a great *Orisha* is the special guardian of a town ; others are the particular gods of certain families or clans. When a woman marries she continues to worship her own family god, and her husband makes provision for her to do so.

It is very exceptional for an African tribe to have idols. The Yorubas and a few other nations, however, make images to represent the gods ; they are usually of wood, crudely carved, and we may regard them as in many ways similar to the idols of India. They are in most cases in more or less human form ; they are painted with bright colours, and sometimes clothed with cloth garments and decorated with shells or bead-work. An outstanding exception is the Thunder-god, called Shango among the Yorubas, who is represented by a

piece of wood cut in the shape of a double-headed hammer, sometimes very elaborately carved.

Temples, Shrines, and Sacred Places

Images of one or more of the gods may be found in most Yoruba houses, and in some places there are small temples to them. But pagan Africa has no temples such as are so numerous in China, Japan or India. After some considerable search a temple to the Thunder-god was found in a compound in the great town of Ibadan ; it was so hidden away that the missionary who had lived there for many years was not aware of its presence. Indeed, it is part of an ordinary house in which the Shango priest lives with his wives and family. At the back of a very ordinary veranda is a façade of columns, each carved to represent figures of men and women (some mounted on horseback), animals and mythological beings. The dark room within has carved images and symbolic stones, with hangings of leather. This is by far the most elaborate temple I have ever seen in West Africa. In Uganda the national gods had temples on hill-tops, with estates appointed for them by the king. But in most places temples are only miserable sheds.

More often, however, there is no temple at all, for the Orisha dwell not in temples made with hands. In the forest, a path leads to a sacred grove. The approach to it may be guarded by a "fetich-arch"—a mat or fringe of plaited glass hung across the path. In that grove there may be an idol, or there may only be a symbolic representation of the god—a lump of clay, a stone, or a shapeless piece of wood—for the people hold that, as the god is a spirit, an image is not necessary.

Often the god is believed to dwell in a pool. Mr P. A. Talbot, who was British Resident in the Eket district



By kind permission of

Captain T. S. Rattray

AN ALTAR TO THE SKY-GOD

In Ashanti many compounds contain an altar to the Sky-god, in the shape of a forked branch cut from a certain tree. . . . Between the branches, which are cut short, is placed a basin, and in this receptacle is generally to be found the offering (p. 100).

of Southern Nigeria, and a most careful investigator of African beliefs and religious customs,¹ tells of visiting a very sacred pool in the secret recesses of the forest. It was called the Pool of Life, and was the dwelling of the spirit known as the Great Mother, or the Goddess of the Face of Love. Hitherto the very existence of this pool had been kept a jealously guarded secret from Europeans. It was only small, and was surrounded by high steep banks, covered with tropical vegetation and festooned with flowers. The water was very deep and in part covered with innumerable water lilies. There were hundreds of fish, so tame that they would eat fearlessly out of the hand of the priest ; in olden days any man who attempted to harm them would have been at once led down to the place of sacrifice and beheaded ! In the face of a moss-covered rock that rose from one side of the pool was a circular hole in which the priest laid offerings for the Great Mother. African imagination invests such a spot with a leopard and a python who guard it from sacrilege. To this Pool of Life come married couples to pray for children. Amid varied ceremonies, the wife wades into the stream that flows from the pool, and, making obeisance, prays :—

O Great Mother ! Keeper of Souls ! What have I done to anger Thee ? Look upon me. . . . Behold ! I bring gifts, and beg Thee to have pity upon me and give me a child. Grant but this prayer, and all my life I will be Thy servant.

Should the boon be granted, the grateful parents bring to the goddess their thankofferings. Other requests are also brought to this and to other deities.

As we get to know more of the beliefs of the people it becomes more and more certain it is wrong to say that

¹ See his book *Life in Southern Nigeria*.

African religion is *entirely* a matter of fear, unrelieved by hope or confidence or trust. The people do bring petitions for help and such things as they desire ; to the Rain-god they pray for rain, to the Earth-god for good crops, and so on ; they regard the gods with some measure of confidence and expectation, and their attitude to them is generally one of devotion. In Uganda, the Lake-god Mukasa is held to be chief of the gods ; he is regarded as a kindly being, never desiring the life of a human victim. He gives the people food and cattle and children. Roscoe tells us that almost certainly Mukasa was a human being who, because of his benevolence, came to be regarded as a god. His chief temple is on an island on Lake Victoria.

As our knowledge increases it becomes clear that these gods and goddesses occupy a more important place in the life of the people than was formerly supposed. With some tribes the days of the week are called after them, certain days and special occasions being connected with certain gods, and on those days offerings are made to them—a fact that reminds us that the days of our own week are called after gods worshipped by our heathen forefathers. At the time of ploughing, seed sowing, and harvest, special worship is offered to the gods believed to be connected with such work. The guardian gods of the town or village are constantly appealed to, and the family gods receive even more regular worship.

Have Africans any Systematized Beliefs ?

It has long been held that the Africans had no *system* in their beliefs or religious practices. Recent research has shown this idea to be mistaken. Our knowledge of the subject is still fragmentary ; but where the matter has been fully investigated it is found that at least some

tribes have more or less organized systems, with recognized relationships among the gods and definite ideas connected with each. Such conceptions have long been kept secret from the proud white conqueror. Africans do not open their hearts to travellers, nor to unsympathetic questioners who may ridicule their ideas. Even the missionary or official who has their complete confidence may utterly fail to get at the facts because of the African's reluctance to tell the secrets of his race, and because very often he is more anxious to please the white man than to tell the truth ; he tries to find out what answer the questioner would like and he gives him that—be it true or untrue ! But patient research, continued under enormous difficulties for long years, is beginning to yield rich results, and almost every year adds to our knowledge.

The people of India believe that their gods are connected, and they group them into families and divisions ; they go further, and conceive that each god or goddess represents some particular power or attribute of the Supreme God, and is, in fact, part of his great scheme of operation among men. We are now beginning—only beginning—to find something of the same idea in Africa, particularly in West Africa. It is becoming clear that one *Orisha* is thought to be related to another, and to represent some particular functions of a still greater God who is above all.

The Conception of a Supreme God

We have suggested that the terrors of the tropical forest naturally incline the African villager to a belief in evil spirits. There are other factors working in an exactly opposite direction. The rain, that fertilizes his fields and gardens, comes down *from the sky* ; it is that

same rain that fills the springs and lakes and rivers and the sacred pools—and it comes *from the sky*. Then there is the sun, that dazzling, burning, wonderful sun, that makes the earth to bud and bring forth, that ripens his corn and fruit ; and that great sun is *up in the sky*. The lightning and the thunder that he fears, come *from the sky*. All these things tend to make the African look up ; they suggest to him that in the sky there is some Force that is infinitely great. Is it any wonder that there are clear traces of belief in a Sky-god ? And when our knowledge is greater we may find that belief much more definite and important than we have usually supposed.

Among the Baila in Northern Rhodesia there is the great Sky-god Leza ; he is wind and rain, lightning and thunder. He is very widely recognized and his name is in constant everyday use. In Ashanti very many domestic compounds contain an altar to the Sky-god, in the shape of a forked branch cut from a certain tree. Between the branches, which are cut short, is placed a basin, or perhaps a pot, and in this receptacle is generally to be found an offering of such things as boiled yam, banana or eggs. There are in the old Ashanti palaces little temples to this great Sky-god, whom they call Nyame. In other parts of Africa the Thunder-god is held to be the Great God, or at any rate closely associated with him. In one way or another, the various Rain-gods and Storm-gods, the Sun-god, the Moon-god and others, are also thought to be connected with the great Sky-god.

This mighty One in the sky is held to be supreme—the greatest God of all, to whom all others are but as servants. Some tribes regard Him as the father of the lesser gods. It has long been known that every African

tribe has a name for Him.¹ Some have contended that this conception of a Supreme God is not really of African origin, but was learned from Christian and Mohammedan missionaries. But this theory is no longer tenable and must be entirely abandoned; for it is now certain that the idea of a great God is exceedingly ancient.

It is often asserted that this Supreme Being is little more than a vague shadow in the African mind; He is so far away as to be the object neither of hope nor fear—a faded memory, a mere name and nothing more. But this is becoming more and more doubtful. As our knowledge of African religion increases, it becomes certain that some African nations have clearer thoughts about Him than we once supposed, and it is possible that it may be so in other cases also. The African mind is a vast continent that we have scarcely begun to explore; and just as Park and Livingstone, Speke and Stanley, found great rivers and lakes never before seen by white men, there may yet prove to be in African religious thought, beliefs and practices hitherto unsuspected. Here is a great field waiting to be opened up by careful investigators.

Some tribes think of the Supreme God as female—"the great Mother." The Ibos of Southern Nigeria call her "The Goddess of the Face of Love" and connect her with the giving of children. She is the creatress, the Mother of all. There are traces that in the long-ago she was thought of as having a husband—

¹ The names differ widely: on the Congo it is Ibanza, Iyanza or Nyakomba; in the Gaboon country it is Anyambe or Nyambi; the Eastern Bantu say Mulungo or Moongi, the Baila call him Leza, and the Zulu Ukulunkulu; in West Africa the words Geyi, Okyerampon, Nyankupon and Olorun are used.

a "Father God." But insistence on reckoning descent on the female side alone has caused Him to be forgotten, and to-day the "Mother" goddess is the Supreme. In other places also (Ashanti for example) there is a conception of an "Earth-Mother," but she is subordinate to the Supreme Sky-god.

The Great God is the subject of many proverbs. The Ashantis have the following :—

Of all the wide earth the Supreme Being is the elder.
If you wish to tell it to the Supreme Being, tell it to the winds.
If God gave you sickness, He also gave you medicine.

Captain Rattray found in one of the temples of the Sky-god four priests whose names were "God help me," "Take it and give it to God," "God's word," and "God's favour." One of the Ashanti names for the Supreme is Okyerampon (the Never-failing One), and another is Nyame (My Maker); yet another is Nyankupon (My Great Friend). The Baila speak of Leza as "the Creator," "the Moulder," "the Constructor," "the Guardian," "the Giver" and "He from whom all things come." These names obviously express thoughts about the Great One; and they seem also to imply that He is a benevolent Being whom men can trust.

Contrary to the usual assertions, it is now clear that the Africans, or at least some of them, offer worship to this Supreme God. Rattray tells us that he thinks "not a day passes among any of the old folk upon which some little offering is not cast upon the roof of the hut or placed on the altar beside the door to the Great God of the Sky, who is 'of all the earth the King and Elder.'" There are also evidences of actual prayer to Him, as for example, words uttered by the priest at one yearly ceremony: "My God, I pray you for

life and I pray you for strength.”¹ We have already quoted (on p. 97) the prayer addressed to the great “Mother Goddess” of the Ibo people by a woman desiring a child. Turning to South-Central Africa, the Rev. E. W. Smith gives us the following petition to Leza in time of drought² :—

Leza, we pray Thee give us water.
We beseech Thee very much—we Thy people.
We are humble, we are abased—we Thy people.
It is Thou whom we trust alone.
We have no other whom we trust.

The same authority gives the following Baila prayer for a sick man :—

Leza, I pray Thee ! If it be Thou who hast made our brother sick, leave him alone, that Thy slave may go about by himself. Was it not Thou who created him on the earth and said he should walk and trust Thee ? Leave Thy child, that he may trust Thee, Eternal One ! We pray to Thee—Thou art the great Chief !

Thanksgivings, as well as prayers, are offered to the Great God : “ I thank Thee for the meat Thou gavest me. To-day Thou hast stood by me.” And the Baila say : “ Who gave us the meat ? It was Leza who gave it to us.”

It is true that this Supreme Being is a Sky-god. But it is certain that the African conception rises higher than that of the mere forces of nature. The worship of Leza, or Nyame, or whatever the name by which he is called, is not merely the worship of sky and rain and thunder. The Supreme Being is regarded as a personal God who sends these things down from the sky ; men and women are His children, whom He has made and

¹ See *Ashanti*.

² See *The Ila-Speaking Peoples*.

whom He loves and seeks to help. But there is little *moral* thought concerning Him ; He is regarded as mighty and as kind ; but so far as our knowledge goes there is scarcely any idea of His holiness, and of His hatred of sin.

The Africans, in all their darkness, the dense darkness of their paganism, have this dim knowledge of the great God who, even in pagan Africa, "has not left Himself without a witness." But their knowledge is very dim, and clouded with a myriad superstitions. At best He is remote from them. Yet they are conscious of Him ; and their need of help and deliverance drives them to a thousand errors of belief and practice. In their darkness they grope, "feeling after Him if haply they may find Him." Smith tells the following Baila legend¹ :—

Once there was an old woman in whose heart there grew a desperate resolution to find God and to ask Him the meaning of sorrows which had befallen her. Somewhere up there in the sky must be His dwelling : if only she could reach it ! She began to cut down trees to aid her to climb. This plan failed, and she gave it up in despair ; but not her intention of finding God. She next sought for a path that would lead to Him : "Where the earth and sky touch," she said, "I shall find a road to God, and I shall ask Him." Again she failed. When people asked what she was searching for she answered, "I am seeking Leza." Still she failed. . . . She never obtained her desire : she died of a broken heart. And from her time to this, nobody has ever solved her problem.

Here then is the task before the messenger of Jesus Christ : to reveal to Africa the face of the "Unknown God."

¹ See *The Ila-Speaking Peoples*, p. 197.

CHAPTER VII

THE CRESCENT AND PAGAN AFRICA

The Mohammedan States of the Sudan

A FEW hundred miles from its delta the Niger skirts the Hausa kingdoms of the Sudan. We almost seem to be in a new world—physical, political, religious and social. Here, in the very heart of the Dark Continent, are great commercial cities, from which caravans of camels stream forth across the Sahara to sell their merchandise in ports on the Mediterranean coast and return loaded with goods from Europe. Horsemen dressed in brilliant red ride swiftly from town to town carrying the messages of kings. The villages are grouped around the minor walled towns, whose chiefs administer their own districts and pay annual tribute to the Emir (king) of the huge walled city which forms the capital of one or other of the seven Hausa kingdoms, all of which were once suzerain to the powerful Sultan of Sokoto. Wherever we turn there are evidences that we are in a Moslem land.

The Hausas are a black race of somewhat mixed descent, originally pagan, but converted to Islam possibly about the fourteenth century. To-day they number about twelve millions; and every one seems to be a born trader. Early in the nineteenth century they were conquered by the Fulani, a powerful pastoral race from the north, who, though few in numbers, easily overcame the peace-loving Hausas.

A Great Mohammedan City

One of the most important of the Hausa cities is Kano, famed for the manufacture of cloth and its great dye industry. It is said to have written records dating back eight hundred years. It is surrounded by a massive wall no less than thirteen miles in circumference, from thirty to fifty feet high, and forty feet thick at the base, narrowing as it rises to the battlements. This once formidable rampart is made of mud and earth, with an inner framework of tree-trunks. When stormed by a small British force in 1903, shells had absolutely no effect upon it; they just buried themselves in the mass of earth; and it was not until our army attacked at a more vulnerable point that the city was captured and Hausaland passed under the British flag. On its outer side the wall is encircled by a deep moat. The city has thirteen gates, several being deeply recessed to give the defenders the greatest possible advantage over an attacking force. The buildings do not occupy the whole space within the walls; there are great stretches of waste ground, and also gardens, cultivated plots, and palm groves. The houses are built of sun-dried mud bricks, plastered over with more mud, and then highly polished by friction with a smooth surface. The roofs are flat, and usually have a small cupola in the centre.

The most notable of the buildings is the palace of the Emir. It is a masterpiece of mud architecture—a huge mud-built castle, probably five acres in extent, with strong walls, an arsenal, a private mosque, a royal treasure house and other buildings of very fine workmanship. There is also a small mint, a court of justice (perhaps it was formerly a court of *injustice!*), and other public buildings.

Great is the state maintained by the Emir of Kano. A visit to his palace was of more than ordinary interest. We passed through several spacious courts, where were numerous retainers, including companies of state trumpeters, messengers and guards. We were received with ceremony by richly dressed courtiers and personal attendants, chief of whom was the Wazari, or Vizier—the second man in the kingdom. Solemnly we were conducted into a private audience chamber, a small apartment in which the Emir received us, reclining upon a dias covered with rich cloth. We were also shown the great audience halls of the palace.

When Canon C. H. Robinson visited the reigning Emir of Kano on Christmas Day 1894, having first sent in a substantial present, he and his two companions were kept waiting for two hours in an ante-chamber while the gifts were submitted to the Emir for inspection. When at last the visitors were ushered into the royal presence, it was almost impossible to see the great potentate, for, after the Fulah fashion, his chin, mouth and nose were covered up with folds of material hanging from his turban, so that little more than his eyes was visible. Much time was spent in salutations, and then Canon Robinson explained that he had come from England to complete a Hausa Dictionary, and the brief interview ended. More than five years later Bishop Tugwell led a party of four missionaries to Kano. In another great palace they were received by the Emir, who, after hearing the purpose of their mission, ordered them to leave the city within a week.

Many changes have taken place since those days ; the present Emir is the nominee of the British crown, and acknowledges the over-lordship of Britain. The whistle of the railway engine may now be heard in Kano ; for two

miles outside the walls there is a station, and also a growing European settlement where traders and business men may dwell and travellers may visit. A missionary, also, is now stationed there.

Kano Market and Kano Traders

Of the open spaces of Kano, the most important is the great market, one of the largest in Africa. The number of people congregating there on a busy day has been estimated at from four thousand to twelve thousand—a strangely cosmopolitan crowd, representing all the Hausa and Lake Tchad states, the pagan tracts to the south, and desert peoples from the Sahara. Magnificent specimens of humanity are many of the Hausa merchants, with ample garments of white or blue cloth, and handsome turbans covered with embroidery. Some of the better class wear vests fringed with costly lace. At the many stalls are poorer people with coarser clothing. A company of horsemen gallop past, their steeds decked with many coloured tassels and curiously wrought saddles, bridles and stirrups of red, blue and yellow leather—some of them silver mounted. There are Arab or Morocco traders also, who have come across the desert with Lancashire cotton goods, Sheffield cutlery, and paper with the London or Marseilles watermark. In recent years, however, such things usually come by a different route—by ship to Lagos, and thence nine hundred miles by the new railway to Kano. There are also on sale the numerous articles of local manufacture: splendid specimens of leather-work, made with rare skill—slippers and sandals, cushions, bags, purses; and there is always a display of finely carved wood-work and highly decorated calabashes. The blacksmith exhibits the tools and agricultural implements made at his forge, the weaver his

cloth, and the dyer his many coloured wares ; Kano craftsmen are famous throughout the northern half of Africa. Other merchants have stores of wool, hides, or the various grains grown in the country. There are also the camel market, horse market, ox market, and donkey market.

Twenty odd years ago Kano market was famous, or infamous, for another commodity no longer to be obtained there—slaves. When Canon Robinson was in Kano, slavery was rampant ; he tells how, on one occasion, he saw a thousand slaves brought into the city as the result of a single raid among the pagan tribes to the south and east ; and once his expedition crossed a tract of country, sixty miles wide, that had just been devastated by a powerful king. At several other towns visited, he found the local king was away slave-raiding *in his own dominions*. Slaves were then the standard currency of the land ; taxes and dues, and even the Sokoto tribute, were paid in human beings. The change came in 1903, when Sir Frederick Lugard captured Kano and Sokoto, and deposed both Emir and Sultan, proclaiming a British Protectorate. While permitting persons who possessed slaves to retain them, he absolutely prohibited slave-raiding within the area.¹

The Trader-Missionaries of Islam

Hausas and Fulani, therefore, are forced to follow more humane occupations, and devote themselves to legitimate trade. Hausa merchants and traders may now be found throughout West Africa ; there is scarcely a village without one, or which does not receive at least an occasional visit, while in big towns like those of the Yoruba

¹ Though prohibited, slave-raiding is still carried on in certain remote parts of Africa, and it tended to increase while the great European powers had the War on their hands.

country, Lagos, Kumasi, or Cape Coast Castle, there are whole colonies of them. They are the travelling traders of West Africa, and every one of them is a witness for Islam. Unlike the average British trader, they carry their religion wherever they go and never hesitate to let it be known to all. They offer up their prayers, and where possible they erect a little mosque—often built only of mud or thatch. Some of them open schools and teach pagan boys the elements of Islam ; others marry pagan women and their children are always Moslems. Strangely enough these representatives of the higher faith are usually extremely dirty in person and habit—in striking contrast to many tribes, the Yorubas for example, who are notoriously clean.

But though thoroughly Moslem, these traders share the common superstitious nature of Africans, and charms seem indispensable. They wear around their necks little leather lockets in which there is supposed to be a fragment of paper with a few words from their sacred book, the Koran. They sell these charms to such pagans as declare their readiness to become Moslems, and make not a little profit by such transactions. These Hausa trader-missionaries make a good many converts to their faith : they make " submission " very easy ; they ask very little of their converts, and impose upon them no tests, moral or religious ; many converts from paganism do not even know the daily prayers, which in any case are said in Arabic—a dead language to the African tribesman.

There can be little doubt that Islam is spreading in some parts of West Africa, though not nearly as rapidly as was once supposed. But the infiltration is going on steadily and continuously, and there are whole towns and villages that have " Islamised " (*i.e.* " surrendered ")

during the last twenty-five years. Its extension among the pagan tribes is one of the problems of missionary effort. A recent incident in the Sierra Leone Protectorate well illustrates the position. The paramount chief of Pyge West, Mendiland, expressed to a missionary who visited his domain his desire to become a Christian, and urged that a missionary be sent to live among his people. "It means either Christianity or Mohammedanism," he said. "The mosque is already built, but at present it is empty. The priest is in the village, and we are only waiting for you to decide whether you Christians will open a church and school or not. We have been waiting for you for two years. Mohammedanism is good; but Christianity is better for my people. If we cannot have the best, we must take the second best."

One thing that tells heavily in favour of Islam is its short clear creed: "There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is the Apostle of Allah." What could be simpler and more easy for the untutored African to grasp?¹ With all its faults and half-truths, no one who knows the facts will deny that it is far better than African paganism with its haunting fear of spirits, its countless fetiches, its human sacrifices and its degrading rites. Where Islam reigns, these more terrible features disappear. But unfortunately, though the old semi-naked African, on becoming a Moslem, may be covered with more ample clothing, a thousand instances prove that Islam does not change the heart. A belief in one God is substituted for the fear of numerous spirits, but too little is demanded or even looked for in the way of moral reformation, and most revolting cruelty may exist under

¹ For an account of Islam, see *The Rebuke of Islam*, W. H. T. Gairdner. (From all Missionary Societies, 1s. 6d.)

the banner of Islam.¹ There is a new sense of "brotherhood," but the status of women is little if any better, and there is only too much justification for the assertion that in West Africa Islam is Paganism in another dress.

What Islam did in Uganda

In the very heart of Equatorial Africa is the remarkable state of Uganda, one of the most highly organized in the whole continent. The history of the Baganda—preserved by memory—goes back for a thousand years, and the names and deeds of every one of their thirty-two kings have been handed down. Their culture, while thoroughly African, is startling, and they have always shown a remarkable instinct for cleanliness and social order. Their personal habits, their homesteads, and their villages are remarkable for their neatness, and politeness and courtesy are a natural instinct. Canon Roscoe, who has thoroughly investigated the customs of the Baganda before the advent of Islam and Christianity, tells us that each district chief was required to maintain in good condition a road, four yards wide, from the capital to his own country seat, which in some instances was at a distance of a hundred miles. The customs of social and court life were organized to an extraordinary degree. Real poverty did not exist, and the people were charitable and liberal. But for all its outward organization and prosperity Uganda was subject to tyranny and cruelty of a most appalling kind. Human life was held so cheap that at certain ceremonies the king's attendants would be sent out on to a public road to

¹ Sir Harry Johnston's *Story of a Slave* is a perfectly ghastly picture of Moslem life in Central Africa. Yet no one knows the facts better than this great authority.



THE KING OF UGANDA

"To-day a Christian Kabaka (King Daudi) rules Uganda ; his katikiro is a Christian, and many of the chiefs are Christians" (p. 117)



MARKET DAY IN UGANDA

"The market has begun and the noise is considerable. . . . All manner of goods are arranged upon the ground for sale—vessels of palm-oil, stores of grain, dried fish, pottery, wooden stools, vegetables" (p. 50).

kill as many boys as could be caught. The accession of a new king, the feasts in commemoration of his accession, and the ceremonies held to prolong the king's life, were all marked by similar slaughter of innocent victims. At the death of a king, a number of his court officials and his wives were put to death.

When Speke and Grant, the first white men to visit this important state, reached Uganda in 1862, they found upon the throne M'tesa, the most powerful and advanced of all the Baganda kings. He was singularly able, but despotic and cruel. His caprice was law, his word death to anyone who offended him. The crowd of page-boys who always accompanied him were ready at any moment to seize an unfortunate courtier and put him to death. On one occasion, in Speke's presence, during a royal picnic one of M'tesa's wives was so bold as to offer the king a fruit she had plucked. Furious with rage at a mere woman taking such a liberty, he ordered her to be put to death, and in a moment she was surrounded by a crowd of pages eager to carry out the cruel order. Only the prompt intercession of Speke saved her life. On another occasion when M'tesa had been out shooting, Captain Grant asked what sport he had enjoyed, and received the unexpected reply that, game being scarce, he had shot a few men instead! Speke declares that, while he was at M'tesa's capital, scarcely a day passed without at least one of the palace women being led out to execution; usually they were the female attendants, but frequently the royal pages dragged out a woman whose single cockade of hair on the top of her head showed her to be one of the king's wives. The religion of Uganda was the usual African paganism. Human sacrifice was practised—generally when M'tesa desired to look into the future. It usually took the form of flaying alive a

young child and performing incantations over the body. In consulting the oracle as to war, a child and a fowl were tied together and boiled alive over steam! Such was Uganda in 1862.

Thirteen years later, Henry Morton Stanley visited this remarkable land. The same M'tesa still ruled with iron hand, but a singular transformation had taken place. There were many signs of progress, and much of the old wanton cruelty had disappeared. Human sacrifice had been abolished, and life was held more sacred than formerly. The indiscriminate slaughter of innocent people had ceased. In the intervening years a zealous Moslem missionary had found his way to Uganda and had persuaded the powerful monarch to accept Islam. In the Baganda, Islam had a unique opportunity of proving its worth as a civilizing force, for it could not have had better material to work upon. M'tesa himself, before Islam came to him, had proved himself a reformer, ready to strike out on new lines. As Stanley entered Uganda, he soon became conscious of the better organization of the land as compared with the places he had passed through; the name of the Kabaka (king) was on all lips. Messages of Stanley's arrival flew to the capital, and the Kabaka's instructions were sent out that the visitor was to be treated with honour. When, after crossing one corner of Lake Victoria, accompanied by a chief of Uganda and an escort of "five superb canoes forming a line in front" of his boat, Stanley reached M'tesa's chief landing-place, he was received by a great company of well-drilled troops standing in lines forming three sides of a hollow square. A salute from two or three hundred guns greeted the traveller; "numerous kettle-drums and brass drums sounded a noisy welcome; flags, banners and bannerets waved, and the people gave

a great shout." Amazed at this ceremony in the very heart of what he himself called "the Dark Continent," Stanley stepped ashore and was welcomed by a short dignified man wearing a crimson robe over an immaculate white under-dress of bleached cotton, over whom waved a great standard. This was only the Katikiro (prime minister); the explorer had yet to be taken to the palace to meet the monarch. That afternoon Stanley was led into the presence of M'tesa, who, "clad in a tarbush, black robe, with a white shirt belted with gold, sat in state surrounded by his chiefs and high officers of his household." As Stanley approached, "the Foremost Man of Equatorial Africa" rose and advanced to meet him.

Five days later, Stanley wrote in his journal:—

'I see that M'tesa is a powerful Emperor, with great influence over his neighbours. I have to-day seen the turbulent Kings of Usui, and Mirambo, that terrible phantom who disturbs men's minds in Unyamwezi, through their embassies kneeling and tendering their tribute to him. I saw over three thousand soldiers of M'tesa nearly half civilized. I saw about a hundred chiefs who might be classed in the same scale as the men of Zanzibar and Oman, clad in rich robes, and armed in the same fashion; and I have witnessed with astonishment such order and law as is obtainable in semi-civilized countries. All this is the result of a poor Muslim's labour; his name is Muley bin Salim. He it was who first began teaching here the doctrines of Islam. . . . I honour the memory of Muley bin Salim—Muslim and slave-trader though he be—the poor priest who has wrought this happy change. With a strong desire to improve still more the character of M'tesa, I shall begin building on the foundation stones laid by Muley bin Salim. I shall destroy his belief in Islam, and teach the doctrines of Jesus of Nazareth.

Islam—or Christ?

Stanley had, a few years earlier, come under the magic spell of the noblest of African explorers, Livingstone,

and had been powerfully influenced by him ; and the thought of Livingstone came to him as he stood before the great Kabaka of Uganda. In his journal, on the evening of his first meeting with M'tesa, Stanley wrote :—

Speke described a youthful prince, vain and heartless, a wholesale murderer and tyrant, one who delighted in fat women. Doubtless he described what he saw, but it is far from being the state of things now. . . . In this man I see the possible fruition of Livingstone's hopes, for with his aid the civilization of Equatorial Africa becomes feasible. I remember the ardour and love which animated Livingstone when he spoke of Sekeletu ; had he seen M'tesa, his ardour and love for him had been tenfold, and his pen and tongue would have been employed in calling all good men to assist him.

And Stanley, the once sceptical newspaper man, set himself to do what he believed Livingstone would have done : he spoke to M'tesa about Jesus Christ. The Kabaka called a great council of chiefs for the discussion of the great question—" Islam—or Christ ? " The result was that M'tesa, turning to the explorer, said :—

Stanlee—say to the white people that I am like a man sitting in darkness, or born blind, and that all I ask is that I may be taught how to see.

Stanley was sent out to explore, not to evangelize. Missionary effort formed no part of his commission ; but in the presence of the great Equatorial monarch, he felt it to be his duty. He forthwith set himself to translate into Swahili for M'tesa the entire Gospel of St Luke and an epitome of the whole Bible. Then he wrote to England —to the *Daily Telegraph*—one of the most remarkable appeals for missionaries ever printed.

That appeal was responded to by the Church Missionary Society. What followed is well known. The story of

missionary effort in Uganda is a missionary epic—a story of heroism, death, disappointment, and ultimate triumph. The work of Mackay, the murder of Bishop Hannington, the fearful persecution of converts by M'tesa's successor, the martyr fires, and then the victory—there is no more romantic or wonderful story in the annals of the Christian Church. To-day, a Christian Kabaka rules Uganda ; his Katikiro is a Christian, and many of the chiefs are Christians. The Church in Uganda to-day (exclusive of the Roman Catholic community) numbers 38,000 communicants, 68 African clergy and 4250 lay workers. And from Uganda the light has been carried to the surrounding countries.

As a civilizing influence there can be no doubt that Islam made a distinct contribution to the early progress of Uganda. But it must not for one moment be supposed that it was a good preparation for Christianity. All experience, in Uganda as elsewhere, shows that Islam, more than anything else, closes the door against the Gospel. Christianity reached Uganda just in time, before Islam had obtained a firm hold on the people. The two faiths met on fairly equal terms, and there is no question as to which remains in possession of the field to-day.

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From North Africa, Moslem traders have carried Islam to the West African tribes ; from Egypt they have gone through the regions of Darfur, Ubangi, the Bhar-el-Gazelle, and to Uganda and Kenya. From Zanzibar, Mombasa and other places on the East Coast, Arab slavers for centuries scoured East and Central Africa, carrying sorrow and bitterness and leaving in their track a line of burning villages. That is a thing of the past, and to-day

there is more peaceful penetration. But in recent years the advance of Islam in Africa has been, on the whole, comparatively slow; in many places it seems to be making little headway. The idea of Islam sweeping across Africa like a prairie fire is not warranted by facts. Its progress during the last ten or fifteen years seems to have been negligible except in a few places where it is undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with. There is very little truth in the statement that "Africa is rapidly becoming Moslem." East of the Niger and in the great Congo basin Moslems have made very little progress, and south of the Zambezi their influence is practically nil. It is quite clear that Paganism cannot meet the real needs of Africa, and where Islam has displaced it, it also has failed. Stanley was right when, thinking of the Africa that might be, he saw that the real hope of the Continent was in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW AFRICA

TENS of millions of Africans still follow, in the main, the customs of their forefathers, dressing as they dressed, tending their lands and cattle as they did, fearing the power of fetishes, and shadowed by the fear of witchcraft and black magic. But in many places new forces are at work, and a New Africa is already born. Take for example the great Egba capital of Abeokuta—a town of more than 100,000 inhabitants. Already it presents the un-African sight of a multitude of corrugated iron roofs, and it has electric light and a pipe-borne water supply. The *Alake* (paramount chief) resides in a two-storied house built in European style, and his government is carried on by Europeanized Africans, with Secretariat, Treasury, a Department of Public Works, Printing and Post Offices, a police force with a prison, and other features quite new to African administration. And this in a purely African kingdom ruled by an African prince, with a British Commissioner at hand to offer suggestions.

Turn to Bulawayo, the capital of Matabeleland. Less than half a century ago it was a kraal of thatched huts built in a great circle around a central hut which was the "palace" of Lobengula, the last Matabele king. To-day it is a flourishing town with wide streets laid out in squares on the American plan, large numbers of European houses, stores, churches, clubs, hotels, banks

and Government and municipal buildings. Motor-cars and transport lorries rush along streets aforetime sacred to the ox wagon ; electric light is used in many homes and places of business, and there is an efficient telephone service. Lobengula would be utterly unable to recognize his erstwhile capital, from which he fled in 1893.

Along the coasts of Africa, what were once isolated trading stations have become important ports with more or less safe anchorage or even well-built harbours. A dozen years ago, passengers for Lagos were transhipped in little boats from the liners and landed in steamers small enough to cross the shallows. To-day the liners can steam up well-dredged channels through the lagoons and tie up at the wharves of Lagos itself. Dozens of similar instances could be given. The finest harbour on the East coast is that of Mombasa, the chief port of Kenya Colony. It is a telegraphic centre, and also the starting-point of the very important railway to Uganda.

The Ever-extending Railways

From literally scores of such ports railways run into the vast interior ; and journeys that a few years ago took many weeks—or even months—of uncomfortable travel on foot or by ox wagon may now be done in a few hours by trains de luxe. The late Bishop Tucker of Uganda used to tell of the pleasure it gave him to gaze from the windows of a comfortable railway carriage upon the lion-infested country he had formerly to tramp to reach his sphere of labour in the interior. Places almost inaccessible a few years ago can now with ease be visited in the space of a brief holiday from England.

From all sides these railways are creeping inland, and although there is as yet no line north of the Zambezi

crossing the continent from sea to sea, there will in all probability be at least one line at no very distant date. At the present time, the longest line is that designed ultimately to carry passengers the whole 5000 miles from the Cape to Cairo.¹ In a previous chapter we have seen that the Nigerian railway is carrying to Kano, the great emporium of the Central Sudan, goods that were formerly borne by camel caravans across the vast wastes of the Sahara ; already French engineers are considering the feasibility of constructing a railway across the desert to Timbuctu. In the great Congo basin several comparatively short lines are now working, and will be gradually extended, but it will probably be a long time before steamboat navigation on the Congo is superseded by the iron horse. From most of the railways, side lines run to right and left into the surrounding country and act as feeders to the main lines—a network of railways that is extending every year.

Perhaps the chief function of this railway system is to bring down to the coast for transhipment to Europe and America the vast resources of ivory and rubber, palm-oil, cotton, cocoa and other products. The railways also carry back to the interior of Africa the infinite variety of foreign manufactured articles that have been imported from afar. One well-laden goods train can carry more than some thousands of stalwart African porters, and in many places is superseding them.

The influence of the railways is inestimable. That train, rushing through the vast forests or over grass-covered plains, is week by week carrying into the heart of Africa new influences. Officials, soldiers, representatives of business houses, as well as globe-trotters and

¹ See p. 19.

low-class European traders, are continually passing up and down these lines ; little colonies of Europeans are appearing at the railhead and at certain places *en route*. Numbers of these representatives of Western civilization are men of high character and unimpeachable integrity ; but it is unfortunately true that many of them are actuated only by the most mercenary motives and are utterly regardless of the interests of the African peoples ; some indeed are men of loose morals and drunken habits, and live shameless and abandoned lives. For good or ill, the railways are carrying the best and the worst products of our civilization up country and planting them down in the midst of peoples that, were it not for the railway, are so remote that they might seldom, if ever, see a white man. By the railway the white man's goods, the white man's organizing power, the white man's materialism and vices, are being introduced into the vast interior of Africa ; and happily, we may add, something of the white man's strength, his philanthropy, and his religion also. These things are vital factors in the life of Africa.

The Coming of the Motor

There is yet another, and even more modern, intruder into the life of the Dark Continent—the automobile. In Cape Town and Johannesburg, Zanzibar and Freetown, Lagos and Accra—in fact in and around all important ports and centres of European influence—the motor-car has long ceased to be a novelty, and every year the noise of its hooter is heard farther and farther up country. We read of a sheik in remote Bornu being “Ford mad” ! At first, to the bush African, that rushing, roaring, snorting box on wheels is nothing short of superhuman ; he is disposed to think that the

white man who rides in it must be a god and the black man who drives it at least a demigod ! And as that fearsome thing careers madly along, many a villager who has never before seen so much as a wheel-barrow, has hidden himself in his hut or darted into the bush for safety. But in time he grows more accustomed to seeing that terrible, awe-inspiring car whizz past ; his nerves are steadier, and he can look at it with clearer eye. One day it stops, ceases to roar and puff, and god and demigod step out and begin to take off a wheel, or adjust some part of the mechanism. Presently the trembling villagers see the driver lying on his back underneath the monster, screwing and unscrewing bolts and nuts ; they draw near and talk to him—a man like themselves, who asks them for a bucket of water from the stream and proceeds to pour it into the steaming mouth of that god-like thing. Gradually the wonder vanishes, and they begin to understand.

The motor-cycle goes even where the car cannot, clouds of dust following in its wake. To-day the motor-lorry is carrying goods to places where formerly all merchandise was borne upon the heads of men who marched single file along narrow footpaths. The Government, realizing the possibilities of motor transport, is making roads along which lorries can travel. The new Equatorial motor road from Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, to Mongalla in the Sudan, has reduced a tedious three weeks' journey, through country abounding with herds of elephants and other big game, to a steady run of forty-eight hours. A similar process is going on in other parts of Africa—Uganda, Tanganyika, Nyassaland, and even the Congo territories, not to mention the older colonies such as Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Rhodesia. There are more motor-cars in Lagos than in

many an English town, and even in Kumasi I have seen policemen on point duty directing the motor traffic.

Incidentally, motoring in Central Africa is no child's play. Many of the "roads" would drive to despair the average motorist whose experience is confined to England—rough, uneven tracks, where there is constant danger of getting the wheels of the car stuck in fine dry sand or thick mud. Experiments are now being made with motors with caterpillar wheels for sandy districts where the construction of good roads is difficult. There are rivers and streams innumerable to be negotiated, and occasionally such novel interests as charging into a sleeping lion or being chased for miles by a furious rhinoceros or elephant. But despite these difficulties, the motor has come to stay, and has unquestionably a great part to play in the future of Africa.

Aeroplanes and Wireless

An even more up-to-date innovation is the aeroplane. Organized services are already being arranged for commercial purposes. The Belgian Government has purchased Handley-Page aircraft to fly over the Congo territories and link up the interior with the steamers arriving from Europe. As a factor for exploration the importance of the aeroplane can hardly be overestimated. Wireless telegraphy, too, has entered the field. At Bruges, in Belgium, King Albert has laid the foundation-stone of a great wireless station for the special purpose of maintaining regular communication with the Congo.

The Mines of South Africa

Most people know the story of the English traveller who found some children playing with a small stone outside a Dutch farmhouse near the Orange River. The visitor

looked at that little stone—and then offered to buy it; but the farmer's wife laughed at the idea of selling *stones* and gave it to the stranger. The stone was a diamond, and was speedily sold for £500. That was in 1867. Two years later a Hottentot picked up another diamond weighing over 83 carats. It brought him what he regarded as an enormous fortune—500 sheep, 10 oxen and a house. The purchaser had even more reason to be satisfied, when, a few days later, he sold it again for £11,000. The next to purchase that gem gave £25,000 for it! It is known as the "Star of Africa." Then came scores of diamond hunters who dredged the river beds and sieved the bucketfuls of gravel they brought out. Next they searched the loose yellow sand, and finally turned their attention to the bluish rock beneath, and that was found to be the richest deposit of all. Those adventurous folk were content to live in huts made of old packing cases, barrels, tattered cloaks or anything that they could lay their hands on. But soon, on that dry, dusty veld arose the town of Kimberley. Around it, to-day, are the four richest diamond mines in Africa. Gradually one company, the famous De Beers, bought out all rivals and established a monopoly of enormous value. Naturally the value of the annual output of diamonds varies considerably; there are good and bad years. In 1920, for example, the yield was over £14,000,000; whereas in 1922 it was only £2,266,000.

About the time those early diamond hunters were at work where Kimberley now stands, there were a few lonely farms along a windswept ridge north of the Vaal river. In the 'seventies one of them was sold for £30, and so late as 1885 a farm of 5000 acres might be bought for from £150 to £200. In 1886 gold was found there, and immediately there was the usual rush of treasure

hunters. There were no railways near, and the seekers travelled mostly by coaches drawn by twelve mules or horses; but the simple mining camp grew mushroom-like to a town, and then to the proud "Golden City" (Johannesburg) of our own time. It is the second largest city in Africa (Cairo being first), with a population of over 288,000. The gold mines run for forty miles along the ridge ("the Rand") upon which the city stands. It is the richest goldfield in the world, the output in 1922 being over seven millions of ounces, valued at £29,775,000. Other gold mines have been discovered, chiefly in the Transvaal and in Rhodesia, many of which are also remarkably rich.

The diamond and gold mines have transformed South Africa. Their first effect was the bringing to the sub-continent of large numbers of white miners, traders, and people of all sorts, and the consequent rise of great towns built on European lines. What is even more to the point is the effect upon the native peoples. Almost from the first it was necessary to employ Africans for the unskilled labour, and in 1922 the numbers of whites and blacks employed in the Transvaal mines alone were:—

		<i>Europeans</i>	<i>Africans</i>
Diamond mines	· ·	7,480	22,382
Gold mines	· ·	17,920	188,229

Each mine has its "compound" or dwelling quarter for its African labourers—a spacious quadrangle containing the long, low, corrugated iron buildings in which the workmen live. Their term of contract is usually six months, and their pay ranges from 50s. to 70s. a month and everything found. A large mine may have anything from 1000 to 3000 labourers in its compound,

and in some—but by no means in all—the men are allowed to have their wives and children with them.

Indentured labour and compound systems are always liable to grave abuses. But things are vastly better than they used to be, and not a few up-to-date compound managers pride themselves upon the care they take for the welfare of their workers. Take for example the *Globe* and *Phœnix* Mine, one of the largest in Rhodesia. Its African employees number about one thousand seven hundred, and with their wives and children, the compound contains a total of some two thousand three hundred persons. As many as ten or a dozen tribes may be represented at one time.

This company spends annually considerable sums for the comfort and well-being of its African labourers. Good medical and surgical treatment is given free of charge, and recreation is provided for. The men have their own tribal games, they have their musical instruments and bands, they sing and hold their dances. The company also provides a free open-air bioscope entertainment for them twice a week. Religion, too, is provided for: the heathen or Moslem tribesmen follow their own customs, and such of the miners as are Christians enjoy their church services and schools. Some of the mining companies welcome the help that the Christian missionary can give; and they even provide buildings and equipment, and contribute to the general cost of the work.

Let us for a moment try to visualize the influence of these mines on the native population of South Africa. Many of the workers tramp to the mines from remote kraals hundreds of miles away. They have heard (from men who have been) of the money that can be earned, and of the strange things that may be seen at Salisbury

or Kimberley, Johannesburg or Barberton, or some other centre. At first they are unmoved ; the journey is too great to be risked, or the stories too wonderful to be true. But they hear the same story year after year from one and another of the returning miners, and see with their own eyes the money or goods they bring back with them—and at last they yield to persuasion. From the simple hut in the lonely village they journey five hundred or more miles, and for themselves behold the wonders of a white man's town with its (to them) colossal buildings, and they feel that the half had not been told. They see a new world with countless marvels. They see gold—and tinsel also, the sordid side of mining and colonial life, as well as the wonderful and grand. They all go back changed men, having passed through an experience that has made life different. Some of them return to the mines year after year, and the new ideas and practices they carry back home every time germinate. Many a village in the far-off interior has been debauched by men returned from the mines, and, on the other hand, many a miner has gone back to teach his people things he has learned from the white missionary at compound services. Not infrequently little Christian churches have been founded by such men, and later a pressing invitation has come for a missionary to go to that far-away village and teach the people more than the miner-convert was able to do.

Problems of Labour, Land, and Colour

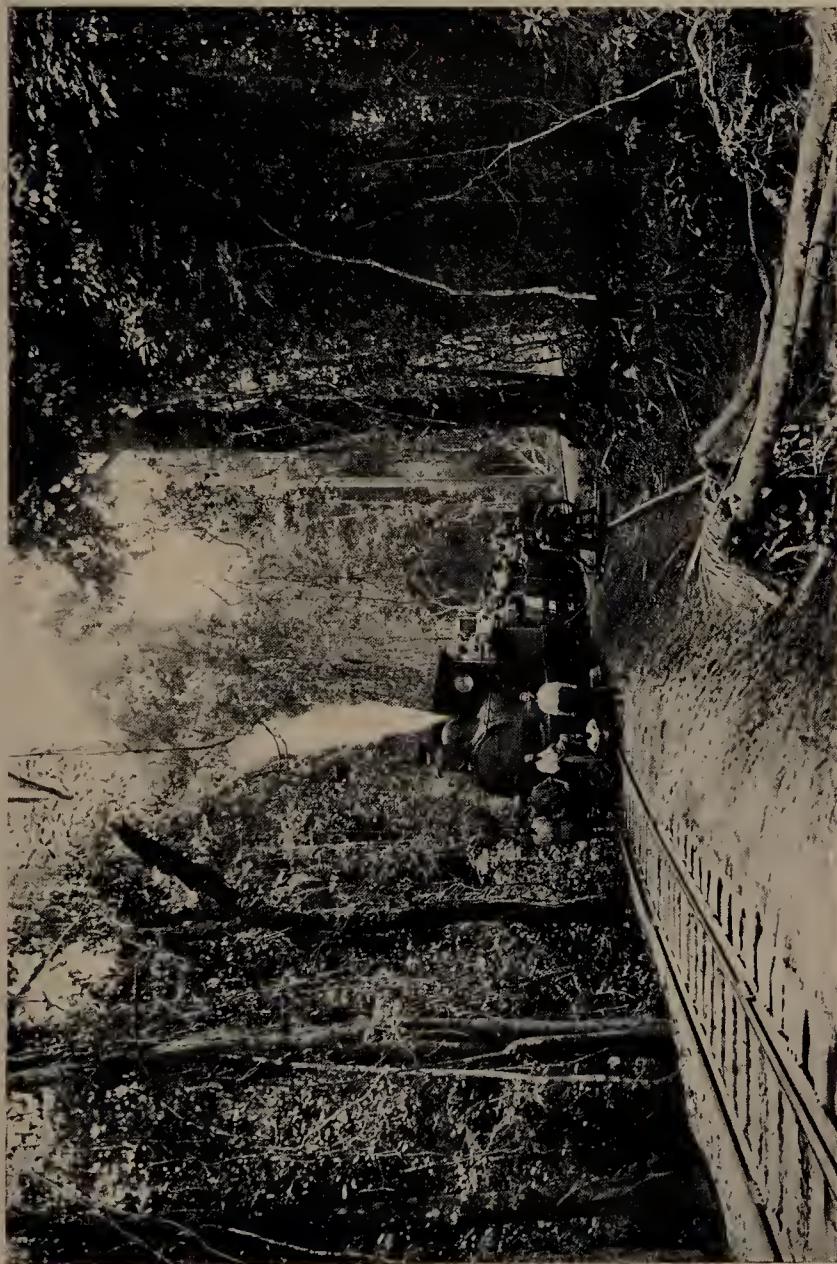
Sooner or later inter-race contact creates problems difficult to solve. The impact of two races, the one white and the other coloured, the one civilized and the other primitive in thought and manner of life, invariably creates difficulties that do not exist before they meet.

The Nigerian Eastern Railway Company

THE NEW AFRICA

By permission of

A scene on the Nigerian Eastern Railway. "That train, rushing through the vast forests, or over grass-covered plains, is week by week carrying into the heart of Africa new influences" (p. 127).



Too often the newcomer from Europe has thought only of personal gain, and his view of the opening up of the country might not unjustly be summed up in the one word "exploitation." The land was for him and he would take possession, staking out his claim at pleasure ; the mineral or other wealth was for him, and he would help himself to it to the limit of his capacity ; the "natives" were convenient servants to be used as he willed. Especially in the earlier periods of colonization there was too much of this spirit manifest by both Boer and Briton. There were always noble men who strove to be just, but there were also those who would for their own ends degrade and enslave the African.

To-day throughout South Africa, there is a loudly proclaimed policy on the part of not a few whites to "keep the blacks under." Although the Africans have to pay taxes, and form the bulk of the population (the 1921 Census returned one and a half millions of whites and five and a quarter millions of Africans), they are entirely unrepresented in the Union of South Africa Parliament. European Labour Unions in the mining areas refuse to allow Africans—however qualified—to do skilled work. The Land Acts of the Union Government deprive the African of the right to hold land except in the very limited "Native Reserves"—an injustice deeply resented, and already embittering the relationship between the white and black peoples over vast areas of South Africa. A grave "Colour Problem" has been developing for years and is now painfully acute.

On the Congo, some years ago, the rubber traffic created a really terrible situation, for under the rule of the late King Leopold, labour was nothing less than slavery. The inhuman cruelties have ceased, but a

serious labour problem remains. In some parts of East Africa, notably in Kenya and Natal, the colour problem has taken yet another form, owing to the large number of immigrants from India. The question of granting them the political franchise has created much bitterness both in Africa and India, and it threatens to become a very serious matter. The Indians, as members of the British Empire, demand political rights in any part of the Empire, a claim it is difficult to resist. The white settlers, however, offer most determined opposition.

Education, its Perils and Possibilities

The African knew nothing whatever of education (in the Western sense) until it was introduced by Christian missionaries, one of whose foremost aims has always been to give the peoples of Africa the Bible in their own mother tongue. To accomplish this task, the pioneer missionary had first to learn the language of the tribe he was working among, then to reduce it to writing (for the tribe, be it remembered, had no written language) and then to translate some portion or portions of Scripture into it. The next step was to teach the people to read the book that had been produced at such enormous labour and cost. For this purpose schools were founded for children and such adults as were not too old to learn and were willing to make the attempt, at first on a very small scale, but increasing year by year. The percentage of utter failures was necessarily great; but the brighter boys and a smaller number of girls received some measure of education. Some of these in their turn became teachers in mission schools; others got employment as clerks—mostly of low grade.

In time, these mission schools increased in number

and in quality; schools of higher type were provided for those who could profit by them, and in some parts of Africa the Government was prepared to give financial aid and even to undertake some measure of educational work of their own. A new Government University, for example, is now being organized on the Gold Coast. In the Transvaal, on the other hand, although the Africans are very heavily taxed, they have to pay even for primary education, while for the whites education is free. The Missionary Societies are still doing nine-tenths of the educational work in pagan Africa.

It is evident that the type of education best suited to the majority of Africans is vocational rather than merely scholastic—education of a practical character, to include of course the three “R’s,” but beyond that to be largely industrial, and above all aiming at the training of character. For such efforts, the famous Lovedale Training Institution stands out pre-eminently as an educational centre that is yearly turning out young Africans to take their place in life. There are now quite a number of similar institutions up and down the continent.

To-day, scattered over many parts of Africa, are tens of thousands of Africans who have received some measure of education. Some of them no doubt misuse it. But multitudes do not. It is not difficult to point to many thousands who have really profited by their opportunity and are the better men and women because they have received a certain amount of education. It is easy to draw an amusing caricature of “the educated nigger”—a youth clad ludicrously in shabby, ill-fitting European shirt and trousers, giving himself “airs” and accosting his master with an “I’m-as-good-as-you” gesture. Such a picture may be drawn from a life-

model, but it only represents *one type* of the products of the schools, and it is therefore unfair to build upon it, as some thoughtless people try to do, an argument against the education of Africans. As in England, there are some people who get just enough education to make them much worse than they were before.

Undoubtedly education is a disintegrating force, and as such is a serious problem. If education uproots old beliefs (however "superstitious"), destroys old customs, breaks down tribal organizations, and removes such moral restraints as existed under the old order, *without substituting something better*, the last state of the man—or the tribe—may be worse than the first. It is a very serious thing recklessly to uproot such order as there is. If it be done unwisely and with haste, chaos may result. Great Britain has shown much wisdom in adopting, in most instances, the policy of retaining the old kings and chiefs, and recognizing tribal law, thus governing the peoples in the way they are accustomed to, and only interfering when principles of common justice were being violated.

On the other hand, where education is not abused, it creates a problem of a very different kind. The educated African naturally declines to be a door-mat for any European—especially if, as is sometimes the case, that European happens to be his inferior in education and ability. It is the educated South Africans who are the backbone of resistance to the Land Acts and the stoutest denouncers of the colour bar. It is they who are rallying their fellow Africans to stand up for their rights as men and as the ancient possessors of the land. So far they have been divided by tribe and language; but education is giving them a common speech—English; and from their European rulers they are learning democratic

principles. The idea of tribe is giving place to that of nation-hood, and many of the more advanced are beginning to recognize that they are not merely Mashona, Basuto, or Zulu, but AFRICANS. A race consciousness is awakening, and in it they are already feeling a new strength. The war too, left its mark upon Africa. Large numbers of Africans came to Europe in the allied armies, or took part in the hostilities in the old German colonies. The post-war world-wide movement for "self-determination" found an echo in some parts of Africa ; already there is a Nationalist movement in East, South and West, and attempts are being made to link it up with the Negro movements in the U.S.A. and the West Indies. These are problems that call for the wisest statesmanship and the broadest sympathy on the part of all administrators.

The Modern West African

Happily race feeling is not yet so acute in West Africa as it is in the South, for the conditions are different. In places like Bathurst, Freetown, Cape Coast Castle and Lagos, education has advanced very remarkably. High Schools and Colleges have done their work well, and not a few West African youths have finished their education at a University in England. To-day there are West African professional and business men—lawyers, doctors, newspaper editors, merchants—who have made themselves a place in the community, have made money, live in European style, send their sons to England for education and sometimes come over themselves for business or pleasure. Many such men are prominent in Church affairs, taking a leading part in the lay offices, contributing most generously to the funds, and on occasion (possibly in a will) giving to the Church they

love a new font or pulpit, a large pipe organ, or an installation of electric light.

In West Africa too, much of the industry is in the hands of West Africans, instead of Europeans. Take, for example, the cocoa industry. The Gold Coast produces more than half the world's supply. In 1922 the export value was £5,840,000. The plantations are practically all owned by Africans, who produce the cocoa and sell it to the European merchants, who are mere middlemen and exporters. Here we have a striking instance of an African industry in African hands—the truest form of the development of Africa.

The Possibilities of the African

We hear much of the possibilities of Africa ; of vastly greater importance are the possibilities of the African. There are some superficial people who loudly proclaim the African "inferior" and maintain that he will always remain so. Such sweeping assertions are to be suspected ; they savour of bias. Africans have repeatedly shown great capacity, and, in certain directions, even genius—instance the talking drums of Ashanti described in a previous chapter. Warrior kings have shown great strength of will and power to organize, and others, like M'tesa of Uganda, and Khama, king of the Bamangwato, great administrative capacity. Not a few men of humble origin have risen to distinction : a slave boy became Bishop Crowther of the Niger, the first convert of modern missions to rise to episcopal dignity, and since his time four other Yorubas have become bishops ; the son of a liberated slave was called to the British Bar, was knighted by Queen Victoria, and became first Mayor of Freetown—the late Sir Samuel Lewis. In the more ordinary walks of life, West Africans prove to have undeniable business

capacity, and all over the continent it is remarkable what fine workmanship quite young boys and girls are capable of under proper training. In mission schools on Congo, for example, boys of cannibal tribes have speedily become excellent printers, and girls but a few years removed from utter savagery have produced most exquisite embroidery. The average African villager is certainly "backward"; for what opportunities for development has he had? But few respond more quickly to good training and influence. With confidence we look forward to the day when the sons and daughters of Africa, rising above the ignorance and darkness of the past, shall yet take their rightful place and make their own characteristic contribution to the development of the world.

BOOKS ON AFRICA

A FOR FURTHER READING

B TEACHING MATERIAL

NOTE.—Where U.C.M.E. (*United Council for Missionary Education*) is given as the publisher, the books can be obtained from the publishers of this volume, or any of the Missionary Societies whose addresses are given on p. 2.

A

Those who desire to read more about some phase of African life may consult the following books:

Physical Features, Exploration, etc.

The Opening up of Africa. Sir H. H. Johnston (Williams & Norgate. 2/6).
Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa. David Livingstone (John Murray. 2/-).

Through the Dark Continent. H. M. Stanley (Sampson Low. O.P.).
The Future of Africa (Chaps. I-III). Donald Fraser (U.C.M.E. 2/-).

Social Conditions, Customs, etc.

Savage Childhood. Dudley Kidd (A. & C. Black. O.P.).

The Essential Kafir. Dudley Kidd. (A. & C. Black. 7/6).

Ashanti. Captain Rattray (Clarendon Press. 25/-).

On the Edge of the Primeval Forest. Albert Schweitzer (A. & C. Black. 6/-).

The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia. Edwin Smith and Dale. (50/-).

Children of Africa. James B. Baird (Oliphant. 2/6).

People of Africa. E. A. How (S.P.C.K. 10d.).

The Baganda at Home, their Customs and Beliefs. John Roscoe (Macmillan. O.P.).

Religion

(a) Animism.

The Religion of Lower Races as illustrated by the African Bantu. Edwin Smith (Macmillan. 4/6).

The Future of Africa (Chap. IV). Donald Fraser (U.C.M.E. 2/-).

Magic and Fetichism: Magic, Beliefs and Customs of the Ibibio Tribe. A. C. Haddon (Constable. 2/-).

Life in Southern Nigeria. P. A. Talbot (Macmillan. 21/-).

(b) Islam.

The Story of Islam. T. R. W. Lunt (U.C.M.E. 1/-).

The Rebuke of Islam. W. H. T. Gairdner (U.C.M.E. 1/6).

Problems of Land, Labour and Race.

Africa—Slave or Free? J. H. Harris (S.C.M. 3/6).

Social Problems and the East. Frank Lenwood (U.C.M.E. 2/6).

- The Black Problem.* D. D. T. Jabavu (Friends' Bookshop. 4/-).
Africa in the Making (Chaps. I, II, V and VI). H. D. Hooper (U.C.M.E. 2/-).
Race Problems in the New Africa. W. C. Willoughby (Oxford University Press. 15/-).
The Clash of Colour (Chap. III). Basil Mathews (U.C.M.E. 2/-).
The Dual Mandate. Sir F. Lugard (Blackwood. 42/-).

Education

- Education in Africa.* T. Jesse Jones (Phelps-Stokes Fund, New York. 5/-).
The Education of the South African Native. C. T. Loram (Longmans. 6/6).
Christian Education in Africa and the East. (Student Christian Movement. 2/6).

B

The following is a list of graded missionary text-books on Africa for Sunday School teachers and other workers among young people. The books will also be found useful by teachers in day schools as supplementary material for geography and history lessons, etc.

For Workers among Boys and Girls, aged 9-13

- Talks on Africa To-day.* M. M. Sharp (U.C.M.E. 1/-).
Talks on David Livingstone. T. R. W. Lunt (U.C.M.E. 1/-).
Talks on African Villages. F. D. Walker (U.C.M.E. 1/-).

For Workers among Boys, aged 12-16

- Yarns on African Pioneers.* Basil Mathews (U.C.M.E. 1/-).
The Black Prince of Africa. A sketch based on incidents in the life of Khama, Chief of the Bamangwato. Robert Leighton (U.C.M.E. 4d.).

For Workers among Girls, aged 14-18

- White Heroines in Africa.* C. E. Padwick (U.C.M.E. 1/-).
Heroines of Unknown Ways. (Mary Slessor.) E. E. Whimster (U.C.M.E. 1/-).

For Children, aged 6-8

- The Book of an African Baby.* Mary Entwistle (U.C.M.E. 1/-).

For Boys and Girls, aged 8-12

- Postcard Painting Book—Children of Africa.* Elsie Anna Wood (U.C.M.E. 1/6).

A Gift Book for Children, aged 3-5

- Kembo: A Little Girl of Africa.* Winifred Barnard (U.C.M.E. 1/6)
 An illustration in three colours at every opening.

Outline Map of Africa

- On stout brown paper; size 29 x 26 ins. (U.C.M.E. 6d.).

THE RACES OF AFRICA

(See map on opposite page)

PROBABLY the first people to enter Africa were the little copper-coloured *Bushmen*, a race of hunters averaging about 4 feet 6 inches in height. They wandered southward. The next important arrival seems to have been the *Negro* race, a powerful, black people who entered somewhere in the neighbourhood of Abyssinia or Somaliland and moved westward right across the continent. Then came the *Hottentots*, a pastoral race, slender, though sometimes tall, and of olive-yellow complexion. They seem to have originated in the neighbourhood of the Great Lakes, or possibly rather farther north, probably by a fusion of Bushmen with Negro, or perhaps even with the Hamitic peoples. Like the Bushmen, the Hottentots moved southward till they reached the southwestern corner of the continent. Then there arose, somewhere in the vicinity of Kenya, a great hybrid race, possibly by the ingrafting of Hamitic and Semitic people upon a Negro stock—a proud warlike race, strong, and of rich brown colour. In successive waves, and in three distinct lines of advance, they moved southward, and gradually occupied almost the entire peninsula—the great *Bantu* peoples of to-day. Meanwhile *Hamites* and *Semites* had occupied the whole of North Africa; they are the Mohammedan races of the Mediterranean seaboard.

The population of Africa is not known: it is estimated at 143 millions.



Map showing the Approximate Distribution
of the African Races.

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THE C.M.S. IN AFRICA

Africa was the earliest field entered by the Church Missionary Society. Its first two missionaries went to the West Coast in 1804. Gradually the work spread from small beginnings among rescued slaves until to-day the Society's missionaries are found in Sierra Leone, the Northern and Southern Provinces of Nigeria, Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, and among the pagan tribes of the Southern Sudan. African Churches—well organized and largely self-supporting—are sending forth the Gospel to countries and tribes hitherto unreached.

The spade work of pioneer evangelism, made famous by Mackay, Hannington, and Tucker; the continuous chain of education—primary, industrial, normal, theological, and now even medical; the raising up of African leadership in men like the C.M.S. bishops, Crowther, Oluwole, and Howells; the wide circulation of Christian literature by the bookshops at Lagos and elsewhere; the training of the peoples for bodily fitness by all methods, from the introduction of Scouts to the giving of special lectures on venereal disease in affected areas—all these agencies have been employed by the C.M.S. in Africa.

In Nigeria, Uganda, and East Africa there are to-day unparalleled openings for educationists, for the Government has given assurance of its desire to co-operate, by a system of grants-in-aid to mission schools, in meeting the clamant demand of the people for Christian education.

In 1924 the C.M.S. in Africa recorded 34,319 baptisms, and 259,000 pupils in mission schools of various grades.

For fuller details see the Report of the African Commission, *The Call from Africa* (2s. 9d. post free); *The C.M.S. and the New Africa* (1½d. post free); also the *Church Missionary Outlook* (2d. monthly); and *Eastward Ho!* (1d. monthly), all obtainable from the Publishing Department, C.M.S., Salisbury Square, E.C.4.

